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**OLD MOROCCO  
AND THE FORBIDDEN ATLAS**





MOORISH WOMAN PRAYING AT THE TOMB OF A MOSLEM  
SAINT.

The devout come and sit beside the shrine, knock three times, to wake the sleeping saint, and whisper their hopes and needs. They pray for children, for love, for revenge, or for deliverance from the spells of vexing djinns.

# OLD MOROCCO

*And the Forbidden Atlas*

BY

C. E. ANDREWS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS  
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS



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OLD MOROCCO AND THE FORBIDDEN ATLAS. I  
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To  
**JOSEPH CONRAD**



## PREFACE

What I love is a minaret, a mosque in the blue moonlight, a white-domed saint's tomb sleeping in the sun, an old fountain beautiful with broken bits of faience, and beside it a Moslem girl muffled in a white veil, except for her dark, deep eyes, filled with the wonder of life and the sadness of the world. I love to dream over the rich colours in old carpets woven with the mysterious symbols of strange human hearts, or to finger bizarre jewels that have glistened in the hair of some once lovely slave. I like to remember the glorious thrill of my first glimpse of Asia, drowned in a dawn of rose and gold, framed in the port-hole of a Roumanian steamer; or the forests of masts against the sunset in the Golden Horn, and the wild procession of strange humanity always thronging over the Galata Bridge; or the jangle of bargaining tongues in five languages in the Jitni Pazar of Monastir. I love the fascination of the old east, its music and its sorceries and its dreams, its dim memories of races that have gone, its peoples that have grown old in living and have become a little tired.

## PREFACE

One day, as I wandered along the left bank of the Seine, longing for the sight of a minaret or the sound of a tom-tom, I idly prowled among the rubbishy old books and pictures and medals in the stalls along the quay. I picked at random John Speed's "Prospect of the Most Famous Parts of the World, London, 1668," and in his description of Africa read that "Fesse hath a City in it with seven hundred Churches, and one of them a mile and a half in compass: And in this country was our English Stukely slain. And Morocho where the chief Town of the same name hath a Church larger than that of Fesse, and hath a Tower so high that you may discern from the top of it the hills of Azasi at an hundred and thirty miles distance. Here is likewise a castle of great fame for their Globes of pure gold that stand upon the top of it, and weighing 130,000 Barbary Duckets." Here was a place to dream about as one sat in one's café on the boulevard, sipping an *apéritif*. Just where was this city of Morocho, and did anything remain to-day of these glories? Or was the old geographer a dreamer too? How wonderful it would be to go and see! There would surely be minarets there and probably tom-toms. And shortly afterward, I passed a window with a large map of the Protectorat du Maroc, and there, something over a hun-

dred miles from the coast was the city of Marrakesh.\* This, of course, must have been John Speed's Morocho. And it seemed so easy to go there, for Morocco, the country, was just across from Spain, and in a few days' journey one could be within the shadow of a mosque, and hear the muezzin's call float over a strange oriental city filled with mystery and enchantment. In fact, the advertisement in the window said that the trip could be made by aeroplane from Toulouse to Rabat in one short day. But this was annihilating space and time too speedily. It seemed disrespectful to the orient. It suggested Professor Einstein's journeying by comet so fast that the traveller's watch turns backward and he arrives before he starts! For one loses eight hundred years in going to Morocco, and a Tyrian trireme seems a more fitting means of going there than an aeroplane.

And so I embarked from Bordeaux on one of the triremes of the Compagnie Générale, and after five perfect summer days on the Atlantic, sailing past the dream—dim mountains of Portugal, landed at Casablanca, the newly built port of French Morocco.

\* When we studied geography in school we used to call it Morocco City, but the native name Marrákesh (in French Marrakéch) has come to be used so that the name of the city will not be confused with that of the whole state. The Moors call their country Maghreb El Aksa, the Land of the Farthest Sunset.

## PREFACE

Casablanca like Tunis and Algiers is a meeting place of Europe and Africa, where the new and the old rub elbows and the active west jostles the indolent east. For a few days it fascinates one to sit in the very Parisian *café* of a splendid modern hotel and watch the medley of life that passes across the square, like Barnum's circus on a boulevard. Smartly dressed women drive by in new carriages. A touring car with a French banker and a sleek Turkish merchant in a fez rolls past. French officers, their brilliant uniforms ablaze with medals, dodge three or four comic little donkeys loaded with huge panniers of grain, with barefoot Moors riding atop. Wealthy, bearded Arabs in flowing burnouses, sheishas, and turbans stroll by with dignity, holding each other by the hand. Then come three or four awkward moth-eaten camels, sometimes with a young foal toddling along behind his mother. And in among this throng of French colonials, Arabs, Berbers, and negroes, representing all degrees of smartness and of misery, are the sweet-meat sellers, carpet vendors, hawkers of hammered brass-ware, heavily loaded porters, and wretched beggars, in swarming, seething activity. And as you sit down, a dozen ragged dark-skinned urchins rush to polish your boots, six boys to each

foot, or to sell you French newspapers a week old. They scramble and squabble underfoot, until the *chasseur* of the café, a big hulking Arab boy, routs them with squirts from a seltzer bottle.

All this colour and life makes a splendid panorama, and one feels far away from Europe, but not far enough yet. This is not the Morocco that I have come to see. The Arab town is better, with its fantastically crooked, crazy little streets and alleys, courts, impasses, and market squares. Everywhere are groups of strange men dignified in graceful garments, or picturesque in tattered rags,—red sheishas, white turbans, long snowy burnouses, or bright-coloured caftans, and innumerable bare legs and yellow slippers,—dirty white legs, light brown legs, chocolate coloured ones, and midnight black ones. But even here there is something lacking. This native town is merely a dependent part of the modern European city that has grown up around it. The hearts of these people are tame, and there is no shadow, no mystery,—merely the charm of quaintness, a flavour of the orient.

And then in the dusk, at a turn in the street, I found myself in the courtyard of a Moorish inn, that smelt of camels and wood smoke and greasy

supper. Half a dozen kneeling dromedaries were chewing their cud, and around the fire sat five dark men from the south country, talking with quiet gestures in a language that was not Arabic. One of the men had a scar across his jaw, that showed plainly in the firelight, and another had but one eye, and their long poignards in battered brass scabbards seemed meant for use. Here was a glimpse of the real Morocco, the strange world that lay far inland across the Bled, under the blue star twinkling in the violet dusk of the eastern sky. Romance was in those bulky bales of merchandise that had come from across the desert to this inn-yard, and stirred my imagination like the smell of sandalwood.

And I decided to set out the next day for the oasis city of Marrakesh, the ancient capital, whose mosques and palaces and gardens have been dreaming in the white desert sunlight for many centuries, and whose people still live in their old ways of life amid the ghost-haunted ruins of their old past.

C. E. A.

*Marrakesh,  
Morocco.*

## NOTE

The translations of several of the Berber poems scattered through the book first appeared in "Asia, the American Magazine on the Orient" and are reprinted through the courtesy of the Editors. The original Berber texts of most of them will be found in Captain Justinard's "*Manuel de Berbère Marocain*" (Dialect Chleuh).

The original text of a number of the Arabic poems may be found in the "*Nozhet-Elhâdi—Histoire de la Dynastie Saadienne au Maroc*," and in Sonnek's "*Chansons de Maghreb*." French versions of others are published in A. Thalasso's "*Anthologie de l'Amour Asiatique*," Martino and Khalek Bey Saroit's "*Anthologie de l'Amour Arabe*," L. Machuel's "*Les Auteurs Arabes*," C. Houel's "*Encyclopédie de l'Amour-Maroc*," and H. Basset's "*Essai sur la Littérature des Berbères*."

The originals of all but two of the folk tales are in Justinard; one is to be found in S. Boulifa's "*Textes Berbères en Dialecte de l'Atlas Maroc-*

*cain,"* and a parallel version to the one in the last chapter occurs in Basset.

The quatrains from Omar Khayyám are quoted from York Powell's renderings or translated from French versions. The Armenian poem is from Archag Tchobanian's "*Les Trouvères Armeniens.*"

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*One*

AN OASIS CITY—MARRAKESH

Like the red eyeball of a lion  
Dying of thirst in a wild land,  
The fierce sun glares,  
Glares upon the desert.  
And the hot wind, hot as the breath of Chitane  
Blows the sands in smoky whirls  
And blinds my steed.  
And I, blinded as I ride,  
Long for the night to come,  
The night with its garment of shadows  
And eyes of stars.

EBN EL ROUMI.

# OLD MOROCCO AND THE FORBIDDEN ATLAS

## *One*

### AN OASIS CITY—MARRAKESH

THE long straight road ahead is lost in a shimmery white haze of heat that shuts in close the monotonous blank horizon. There is not a tree or a shrub in sight—nothing but a brown, baked sandy plain, here and there heaped into mounds and hillocks, with sparse starved clumps of withered grasses powdered with impalpable dust and scorched with the incandescent glare. An intensely dry torrid breath tans my face and burns hot in my throat. Hours and hours pass. The haze opens up a mile or two ahead and closes in a mile or two behind on the monotonous landscape, the monotonous glare, and the intolerable heat. The car stops a moment; not a sound; the limitless white silence of a July afternoon in the Bled. A caravan of laden camels ambles by. The animals

awkwardly plant their soft felt-cushioned feet into pools of dust which blows in choking clouds, and as they pass, they turn their ill-natured faces toward us and wrinkle their thick lips in scorn. Two white-muffled drivers in ragged short burnouses prod them with goads to keep them from bolting, and shout, "*Arrr! Zit!*" in excited falsetto.

The caïd's son in the front seat of our car is silently enjoying his first automobile ride. He is muffled in half a dozen soft-flowing garments, and has retired into himself with the aloof dignity of an eighteen-year-old Arab aristocrat. He is going from his father's castle in the Chaouia province to visit relatives at Marrakesh, the great metropolis of southern Morocco. Beside me is my young friend Ahmet Ben Abbes in a barbarically gorgeous uniform of scarlet, gold, and blue. He is coming home to Marrakesh on a three months' vacation from the military school at Meknes, from which he will graduate next year as a sous-lieutenant. He has less reserve with foreigners than the caïd's son, and we converse desultorily in a mixture of Arabic and French.

The car goes on into the heat over the smooth white military road. The raging sun beats down pitilessly on the withered brown world that lies thirsty, parched, baked out, and dead. A land of

dust, heat, and glare, and glare and heat and dust, day after day, through the long summer suns.

Suddenly, over toward the low barren hills of the Lesser Atlas appears the soft pale blue of warm water in the sun. A turquoise lake, dream-like and dim, smiles quietly at the burning sky, and its vague grassy margin seems to creep closer and closer toward us, reaching out in tempting little bays and inlets. And now on the other side appears another long thin line of shimmering water that loses itself in the white hazy horizon. How glorious it would be to go and lie in it, to splash and plunge down out of the burning glare! Then, in a moment the whole blue vision disappears, and we are left thirsting in a land of sand and thorns. The mirage! Mysterious, strange, incredible!

This is a land of enchantment and unreality, where brilliant empires brief and beautiful as the mirage have lighted their little hour or two and gone, gone without leaving a trace, or at most but a crumbling monument. For the history of Morocco is a tale of turbulent dynasties that endured but a decade, and reigns that have not outlasted the roses in their new-built gardens. There is something illusory and transitory about this land; its successive contacts with culture and occasional periods of grandeur have marked it lightly, and the

people do not care even to remember them. And this fleeting, unstable character seems inherent in the country itself, for during a few weeks in the spring, the desert bursts into flower and then until the next year's rain, shrivels into the brown arid waste of this July afternoon.

After we have endured another hour of the silent, monotonous road, the caïd's son shouts, "Marrakesh!" And there ahead is a vast dark green patch of palm trees, miles in extent, and in the midst, the tall square minaret of the Koutoubia mosque. Far beyond, to the south, loom dim through the hazy air the lofty, jagged, snow-crowned peaks of the Great Atlas. They are vague, and shadowy, mysterious and lone. Perhaps they too are exhalations of the desert, the misty white landscape of a dream that will fade like the turquoise lake and leave us in dumb amazement.

Soon we pass through groves of palms, growing in graceful clumps on ridges and ravines or springing from the ruin of some old sun-baked wall. They shoot up, thousands of them, straight and tall, motionless in the still air, and the slant sunlight makes long sharp shadows and lacy outlines of fronds on the red, baked earth. Now we reach the French town of Gueliz and drive up the long avenue

planted with eucalyptus and evergreens, and dotted, as yet sparsely, with dazzling white, cleanly plastered houses. The car stops for a sleepy little French functionary to get the Casablanca mail. He says nothing, for he is still taking his siesta. No one makes any comment on the heat for there is nothing unusual about 115 degrees in the shade.

We go on past irrigated green gardens of palms, olives, and spreading fig trees, and cross over a wet ravine which is a tangled jungle of bamboo and Barbary cacti, until we are up under the long ancient walls of Marrakesh. Ahmet's dark brown eyes glow as he recognises the familiar approach to his own city, and the caïd's son becomes animated and talkative. Ahmet describes the entry of the French a few years ago, which he had watched as a boy of twelve, squatting cross-legged on the rampart over the west gate. For him the walls have the simple intimate associations of home, but for me they have the wonderful romance of the mysterious orient. These two boys are at least eight hundred years older than I am.

The lofty impressive walls, a part of which dates back to the Almoravide founders of Marrakesh, go seven miles round the city, flanked with two hundred massive square towers and pierced with ten gates, from which start the great highways

that reach to the provinces tributary to the metropolis of the south. These old walls are crumbling and broken, beaten by centuries of tropic rains and worn by a thousand desert sand storms, until their sun-baked clay has faded to the colour of dusty withered rose petals that have lain untouched for years. They suggest the pathos of power that is gone, and fill the imagination with vague dreams of far away and long ago. Their aspect is not mediæval. They call up an older and remoter life than the glittering chivalry with which the fancy re-peoples the walls of Aguesmortes and Carcassonne. Here one dreams of the ancient world of the East and sees along these ramparts the waving, stately peacock fans of Semiramis and the haughty, bearded profiles of Babylon.

How little has the European world known of the great things done here long ago, and ill done. Host after host has marched from the South, from the Atlas, the Sahara, and Senegal, and pitched their striped tents beneath these walls. Sultan after Sultan has risen here, and here great dynasties have disappeared from the face of the earth. The Almoravides, the Almohades, the Merinides, the Saadians reigned here in successive splendours. Twenty times the city has been captured and recaptured, five times it has been destroyed and re-



#### THE ANCIENT WALLS OF MARRAKESH.

The lofty impressive walls, a part of which dates back to the Almoravide founders of Marrakesh, go seven miles round the city, flanked with two hundred massive square towers and pierced with ten gates, from which start the great highways that reach to the provinces tributary to the metropolis of the south.



built. Six hundred years ago its walls heard the fanatical preaching of the zealot Ibn Toumert, and looked upon the slaughter of their inhabitants by his terrible successor, Abd El Moumene, who, with the thoroughness of barbaric conquerors, carried out his vow to pass the city through a sieve. From these gates marched the armies that subdued Spain, and into them passed the triumphant host of Abou El Abbas El Mansour, "The Golden," returning with the spoils of Timbuktu. Here for months waited the first Filalien sultan, while his besieging host ate dates from the stones of which grew the hundred thousand palm trees beside the red banks of the muddy Oued Tensift. And the latest scene in the barbaric pageant happened but eight years ago, when El Hibba, another fanatical reformer of Islam, ended his three weeks' sultanate and passed through this very gate, the Bab Djedid, with his retreating rout of tribesmen and camels and asses, all to be swallowed up in the lost valleys and passes of the Great Atlas.

This afternoon the Bab Djedid sees only two tall Senegalese washing horses in a pool. They sing and shout and take a childish delight in splashing the water over the nervous snorting animals. The sunlight glistens on the wet naked group,—statues in shining black marble. As we pass

through the Bab Djedid the beautiful lofty minaret of the Koutoubia appears perfectly framed in the graceful Moorish arch of the gateway. Over the city manœuvres a French aeroplane. The deep humming makes everyone stare painfully up into the dazzling sunlight. Ahmet and the caïd's son ask me in naïve wonder by what kind of sorcery the thing is done. I am at least one hundred years older than those two boys.

***Two***

**THE MEETING PLACE OF THE DEAD**

Above thine head looms Heaven's Bull Parwín;  
Beneath thy feet a Bull bears Earth unseen;  
    Open the eyes of Knowledge and behold  
This drove of Asses these two Bulls between.

OMAR KHAYYÁM.

## **T**wo

### THE MEETING PLACE OF THE DEAD

EVERY evening when the sun gilds the shining top of the Koutoubia, and the heat of the day is over, Marrakesh wakes up from its drowsy languor and comes out to be amused. All the inns are full of a huge floating population that throngs in and out of the city with trains of asses and mules and camels from every quarter of the Bled, from Fez, from the wild valleys in the Atlas, from the southern plains of the Souss and the Draa, from the rich eastern oasis of Tafilalelt, and once a year from far, mysterious Timbuktu. Dark-skinned Arabs from the cities of the coast, light coloured, blue-eyed Berbers of the eastern mountains, Algerians from the edge of the Desert, Shellouh Berbers of the South, fuzzy-haired Soudanese, negro slaves with one big silver earring, and bearded Jews in dirty black gaberdines—all swarm into Marrakesh and live in its thousand filthy caravanserais. They all wander out in the early evening into the great central square, the Djemaa

El Fnaa, "The Meeting Place of the Dead,"\* which becomes a blend of bizarre costumes and a clash of uncouth dialects and remote languages.

The square itself is a great space paved only with the sun-baked earth of the brown plain in which the city was built. At one end are a few European shops, a café, a post-office, and the sign of a garage,—jarring elements of western progress that has begun to thrust in its ugliness and disturb the mediæval peace of old Marrakesh, mournful among its crumbling monuments. From another angle, one catches glimpses of the old walls, with here and there a twisted palm tree reaching over them, black against the gold of the sun. The farther end of the square shows only the low roofs of the city and the openings of one or two streets, that plunge into a dark, covered labyrinth lined with a thousand shops. From these mysterious streets that in the daytime conceal so many hushed mysteries, now pour forth streams of strange humanity. Swirls of dust rise from the feet of the asses and camels, and the crimson sunset light, diffused through the yellow haze hovering above the square, casts over the innumerable strange faces the glamour of eastern romance that glim-

\* Tradition says that it was so-called because a bloodthirsty pasha once made it a place to expose the bodies of executed rebels.

mers in old tales and in poets' dreams. The magnificent minaret of the Koutoubia, severe with the puritanism of ancient Islam, stretches its long shadow over the frivolities of the square and the passionate sins of the dark streets and close-shut gardens.

This evening young Ahmet has doffed his uniform and appears in a pure white turban, a peacock coloured, long caftan, which vaguely appears under the finely woven white *djellaba*, the graceful flowing outer garment of the Arabs; his bare feet are thrust into loose yellow leather babooches with no heels. The caïd's son, still wearing his travelling *djellaba* of midnight blue, walks with us through the crowd, haughtily disdainful of the noisy confusion, and only suffering it because the sight may amuse me, a stranger guest. My young guides brusquely push aside the careless pressing throng with the lofty air of two marquises of the Old Ré-gime, and angrily shout, "*Bâlek! Bâlek!*"\* to the driver of an ass that is backing his pannier of prickly Barbary figs right into my stomach.

As circulation is difficult for the moment, we stop at the edge of a circle of dusty brown and black faces eagerly grouped around a famous story-teller. He gesticulates dramatically, and

\* Make way.

little rivulets stream down his comically distorted face, as he singles out some sheepish, brown bystander, and roars directly at him the droll conclusion to the "Story of What Made the Sultana Laugh." He wipes his face and catches his breath, while a boy collects a few dirty paper bills from the crowd which merrily chuckles its applause. Then the boy rattles a very much blackened square tambourine as a sign that another story is about to begin and the teller of tales recounts,

#### THE STORY OF THE FOOLISH SULTAN

Once in the old time there was a sultan. He had a very beautiful wife. Whenever she asked for anything he gave it to her. She said to him: "Bring me a covering for my couch." He brought her one. "This is no good," she said. "What shall I bring thee then?" "Bring me one of silk." He brought her one of silk. She said, "No!" "Then what wilt thou have?" "Bring me one of feathers." He said "I will."

Now the sultan lived in the time when birds could talk. He sent for all the birds in the world. They came. He wished to pull out their feathers to make a bed for his wife. Now the owl did not come; she stayed away until sundown. The sultan

said: "Why didn't you come this morning?" She replied: "My Lord, I have been counting over the men and the women, and I have been counting over the days and the nights." Said the sultan: "Which are more in number, the men or the women?" "The women are more in number." "Which are more in number, the days or the nights?" "The days are more in number than the nights." Said the sultan: "Why are there more days than nights? Tell me, is there not one night for each day?" "My Lord, the nights when there is a moon we count as days." "And the men and the women? Tell me, doesn't every man marry a woman?" "My Lord, the man who follows the advice of a woman is a woman!"

The story-teller makes a great deal of this simple folk tale. He acts it out with comic gestures and grotesque expressions. He is evidently a great favourite with the crowd, who follow every word and movement with intense delight. Ahmet tells me he has been a well-known figure on the square for years, and has the reputation of having been specially inspired by the *djenoun*\* of story-tellers, who haunt the great grotto of the Ida-Gounidif in the far south country. The story is ended with the consecrated formula: "That is the way I heard

\* Plural of *djinn*, a spirit or devil.

the tale from the great ones, and so I tell it to you!" The formula relieves the ragged old narrator of the responsibility of having invented something that might not be true, and so incurring the wrath of the powers of light and darkness.

The two boys with me are fascinated by the old story-teller, but are a little ashamed of the pleasure they take in him until they see how delighted I am with the recitals; then they promise to tell me dozens of very droll tales, oh, such droll ones!

We jostle on through the moving crowd, mostly of humble ragged folk,—negroes with piles of newly woven baskets on their heads; old women half veiled, balancing big earthen jars on one shoulder; swarms of idle little ragamuffins with shaven pollis; swarthy young camel drivers from nomad desert tribes, their eyes lusting for the joyous marvels of the metropolis; and occasionally a lithe-bodied Arab, fresh and white, riding a nervous horse caparisoned with scarlet leather. Everywhere there is a bobbing of white turbans, red sheishas, and muffled hoods, and a flutter and wave of dusty white and striped burnouses, amid the twinkle of the bare brown legs of the very poor. And in the early twilight innumerable faces flash by, some scarred with wounds, or disease, some blind in one eye, some pale with hashish dreams, some dark with

## MEETING PLACE OF THE DEAD 37

strange wild desires, and some beautiful as princes in the "Arabian Nights."

My two friends and I stop for a moment to watch a small circle of humble and devout listeners, mostly women smothered in dirty white veils, squatting around a saintly story-teller. His blind eyes roll their ghastly whites; he beats a rhythmical accompaniment on his square tambourine; and shaking his long crinkly hair with the vehemence of his recital, he tells of the wonders that befell Joshua and Moses on their journey to the land of the Farthest Sunset, and of how Noah when his ark had rested on the Moroccan mount, Djebel El Goudi, founded the town of Sallee. The women reverently clap their hands from time to time and shout: "God is great!" as though they were at a Methodist camp-meeting.

A larger group of spell-bound spectators stand in mute wonder at the performance of a snake-charmer from the Souss. He pours forth a wild whirl of hoarse, frenzied words on the power of Allah, the greatness of the Prophet, the ways of holy saints, and the dire influences of afrits, demons, ogres, and *djenoun*. Then, on a high-pitched, wooden pipe he plays a strange weird ancient melody, beginning in solemn cadence like a dance

done before the altar of Isis and played by an Egyptian vestal. The black cloths on the ground begin to crawl and move, and one of them sticks up, uncannily swaying to the tune. The rhythm quickens with little starts and jerks. The magician flicks off the cloths and reveals two dark, thick-bodied coils, with swaying, wedge-shaped heads that beat to the rhythm of the pipe and dart out little tongues like forked flames. With the crowd I am fascinated by the swaying reptiles, and held by the deep-rooted racial fear of the serpent. We are assisting at the incantation of some old dark Hamitic religion or a terrible spell of Pharaoh's sorcerers.

The haunted squealing music stops; the uncanny creatures settle down in flat, sinister coils, dull and sluggish but for the darting apprehensive tongues. The magician handles his familiars with careless impunity, and with much high-pitched, excited talk he scratches his arm with their teeth until the blood runs, and horrifies the crowd by making one snake draw blood on the ear of a boy bystander. Then, as a climax to his performance, he thrusts the terrible head into his own mouth. His eyes dilate wildly; he stretches out the serpent's neck, and, with the noise of a popping cork, pulls the head out

of his mouth. Then he calls on the crowd to give a prayer for Sidi Yahia,\* and they obediently clap their hands, raise them over their heads and chant a brief prayer. And a small black boy takes up the collection.

I turn away with a wondering smile and a shudder down in my spine. I suppose charming snakes is a simple trick to the knowing, but it is an uncanny thing to see here in the heart of an ancient land where one is never sure of what is reality and what illusion.

Another delighted circle is grouped around a company of musicians and Shelluh dancing boys. The players sit on a mat, two of them with curious Moorish tom-toms, which are painted pottery vases with taut sheep-skin bottoms, and two with two-stringed African lutes of quaint plaintive tones. The leader stands apart playing a strange, square-shaped viol with one string, over which he draws a curved bow like those in the miniatures of a fourteenth century Book of Hours. To the flat *tunk-tunk* of the tom-tom and the discordant wail of strings, he sings this Berber ballad:

\* Sidi Yahia (St. John) seems to have been a great patron saint of Morocco in the old days when Christianity flourished in north Africa. For more than a thousand years he has been a Moslem saint.

## OLD MOROCCO

Once I went upon a journey.  
 The second day I came upon a sheaf of lavender,  
 Leaning over a spring of water.  
 —“O thou who drawest water from the well,  
 For the love of God give me to drink”—  
 —“Come down, O stranger,  
 And drink from the hollow of thy hand.”—  
 —“I am bridled by God; I cannot drink.”—  
 —“Come with me to the house;  
 There will be wild honey  
 And mint-flavoured tea.”

(The man of wiles went to the village;  
 Stayed there eight days.  
 The women bought him a jar full of wild honey.  
 He dipped a finger in it  
 But had no time to finish.  
 Came a warrior;  
 It was the woman's husband,  
 Mounted on a gray horse  
 Worth a hundred douros in hand.)

He struck me down, the traitor;  
 Here I am where I fell.  
 Carry me to the mosque,  
 And with a yard-stick measure my shroud.  
 Warm the water for washing my body,  
 And dig my grave, my friends.  
 Weep for me, my friends!  
 Oh mother dear,  
 My mother, who shall say to you,  
 “God keep thy son!”  
 Reply “Amen!”  
 (He was not stricken down in ambush.  
 He has not stolen cattle.  
 Dark eyes blue with antimony caused his fall.)

The leader sits down and three young Shelluh  
 boys, the eldest fifteen, take their places in the cen-



CROWD IN THE DJEMAA EL FNAA, MARRAKESH, AROUND  
A SHELUH DANCING BOY.

They are bizarre little things, these dancers. Their heads are shaven, they wear girls' clothes and embroidered girdles, earrings, bracelets, and gaudy bead necklaces. They have an amusing theatrical smile enhanced by cheeks streaked with paint and eyes darkened with kohl.



tre and dance. They are bizarre little things. Their heads are shaven but for a short square bang, and they wear girls' clothes and embroidered girdles, and earrings, bracelets, and gaudy bead necklaces. They have an amusing theatrical smile enhanced by cheeks streaked with paint and eyes darkened with kohl. The dance begins as a slow intricate pacing of the three in and out, back and forth; then the time of the music changes, and each standing still or turning in a circle, makes rapid movements with his feet, holding his bare arms balanced as he turns. Then the eldest of the boys, without moving his feet, twists his body in sensual, rhythmic undulations that make the crowd shout with laughter. After this somewhat questionable performance he sings a charming Shelluh love lyric to a wild high-pitched melody, barbaric in its strange intervals, fittingly accompanied by the flat *tunk-tunk* of the tom-toms.

O, my fair mistress, cry aloud with joy,  
For, by Allah, the only God,  
At the sound of thy voice  
The rose-laurel of the river will turn to a garden rose.  
At the sound of thy voice  
The sick man will sit up upon his mat.  
At the sound of thy voice  
The old man will throw away his cane.

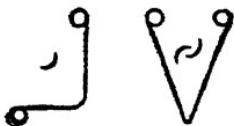
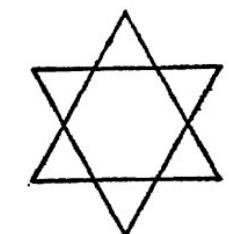
We move on through the crowd of pushing and jostling idlers and buyers. At the edge of the square, the old clothes sellers sit in front of their patched and ragged little tents, squatting amid piles of gaudy garments—stained scarlet caftans, long scarfs of crimson and yellow silk from Fez, and costly embroidered girdles from Rabat. And nearby are trinket sellers with strings of beads, hair bangles, bracelets, and square silver brooches—things to bring back to the women in far oases or hidden Atlas valleys. And then there are the barbers at the edge of the crowd, working in the open air with just a mat hung up to protect them from the sun. The client squats on his heels while the barber shaves his head, all but one long lock behind the ear, reserved for Sidna Azrain, the blind Angel of Death, when he snatches the faithful Moslem up to Paradise.

In and out among the crowd wanders a crazy old figure in a ridiculously tall, pointed brown fez, his long crinkly hair falling into his eyes and ears. He shouts, and twirls in the air an old Saracenic gun banded with silver. He wears his hair long like all saints, dervishes, and holy beggars. The high pointed fez shows he belongs to the sect of howling dervishes spread through all Islam, who with long, rhythmic prayers and swaying, rhythmic

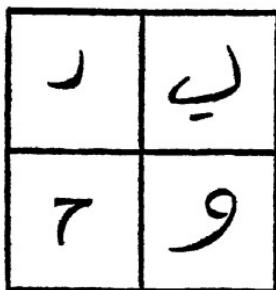
motions, work themselves up to piercing their flesh with hideous skewers, licking red hot irons or inhaling steam from a boiling kettle. But this old fellow is content with howling and juggling his quaint archaic gun, which I wish to steal. In his zig-zag wanderings he is followed by a gaping crowd of Berber and negro children who, walking backward, tread on the mat of a mad old sorcerer, who growls a curse at them.

The sorcerer's eyes look dark and fierce through his long unkempt hair; his body, naked to the waist, is almost black, and terribly shrivelled with fasting and vigils, for he is one of the tribe who gain their power over djinns and devils by prayers to God. There are black sorcerers too who league themselves directly with the forces of evil. Before this old fellow, squat two women, closely swathed in veils except for one eye. One of them asks for a talisman to ward off sickness, which always comes from one of the thousands of yellow and green malignant devils ever swarming over the world. The sorcerer closes his eyes and utters inaudible things, and taking a scrap of dirty paper, painfully inscribes the two interlaced triangles of Solomon's seal, and under it two cabbalistic signs of an ancient occult alphabet,

## OLD MOROCCO



the mystic initials of holy prophets of Islam. He puts the paper into a bit of hollow reed and the woman slips it in her bosom, and dropping a few coins, fades away into the crowd. The other woman moves closer and whispers something to the strange old creature, whose eyes, as he listens, becomes two sharp little gleams in the growing dusk. In a hollow, tremulous voice he tells her to go write the mystic talismanic word, *Badouh*\* seven times



\* This talisman is composed of the initials of four Arabic words signifying four of the attributes of God, The Eternal, The Durable, The Loving, The Gentle.

on the branch of a living tree, then cut off the branch and write further, "This branch was cut off to separate the heart of Yaccoub from the love of Zulieka," and, finally, in the hour of shadows, to bury the branch in the neglected tomb of some dead man long forgotten. He shows her how to trace the letters of the spell, but still the woman does not go. She leans over and whispers again in his ear. The weird old mage gathers up a handful of small cowry shells and little coloured pebbles and casts them before him, muttering hermetical words whose meaning was obscure in Solomon's time. He scans the shells and pebbles and waits for the revelation. For all the events on earth are announced full forty days in advance by an angel who cries them through the four heavens of God, and guardian spirits reveal these things to seers. The old man looks up and gazes long at the first bright evening star behind the Koutoubia tower. Again he looks down at the scattered shells and mournfully shakes his head but will tell the woman nothing.

Contact with Europeans has made Ahmet and the caïd's son feel that they should be superior to such things, and they turn away, but with a nervous laugh. It is not that they disbelieve, but that they feel that Europeans know a kind of higher

sorcery that is expressed in automobiles and machine guns.

As the short twilight begins to come to an end, the crowd thins out and the gleam of lanterns and glow of braziers light here and there little knots of Moors around the sellers of broiled sausages and mint tea. The camel drivers and wretchedly ragged porters squat in circles about dirty old women who ladle out steaming bowls of thin maize gruel from brass cauldrons. This is the supper of most of Morocco, which is too poor to buy the doubtful smelling sausages or mutton stew cooked with rancid argan oil. For dessert there are always heaps of the prickly cactus fruit of Barbary figs.

My two young Arab friends are too fastidious to enjoy the picturesqueness of the square in the evening and propose the French café, but I decline, and we say "*Beslâma!*" many times, and with handshakes and kissing of hands, I leave them and stroll about alone. White shadows flutter by me in the dark, and wavering spots of lantern light move vaguely here and there. My old friend, the Algerian arabesque painter, whose whistling tooth makes his guttural language one degree more un-euphonious, has dropped the flap of his tent, but through the slit I see him reading his Koran by candle light, the book held three inches from his

nose. The tea and date sellers sit Buddha-wise in their stalls, drowsing over their long hashish pipes.

The uncanny music of tom-toms and lutes lures me into a little Moorish café built of bamboo and thatch. An acetylene flare throws a dazzling colourless light over the merrymakers and gives the effect of a cinema picture in sharp blacks and whites. I squat on the mat beside two Berber fellows from the mountains, and we all drink sweet tea and mint and listen to the nearly blind ballad singer's wild recitals of barbaric love and revenge. Between the pauses, the tom-toms and the two-stringed lutes make faster and more excited rhythms, and the tea drinkers sway and clap their hands in time. I try an experimental pipe of kief and vaguely dream of the thousand strange faces that have flashed past me, and the thousand strange hearts full of wonder and fears and desires, and of the throbbing hidden life of this old African city shut within its dead broken walls. But mostly I keep wondering what hidden doom the old sorcerer saw in the shells and wouldn't tell the woman.



*Three*

AHMET ENTERTAINS

I cannot sufficiently describe the wonderful power of this talisman of knowledge—music. It sometimes causes the beautiful creatures of the harem of the heart to shine forth on the tongue and sometimes appears in solemn strains by means of the hand and the chord. The melodies then enter through the window of the ear and return to their former seat, the heart, bringing with them thousands of presents. The hearers, according to their insight, are moved to sorrow or joy.

(The Book of Akbar.)

## *Three*

### AHMET ENTERTAINS

THE afternoon had been most trying. The sirocco from the Sahara had blown a pitiless, dry, burning blast of heat over the city. The windows of hell were opened, as the Arabs say, and God had not yet sent the grateful night breeze from the gate of heaven, off beyond the sunset. The acetylene flares in the withered garden of the Hôtel de France sputtered annoyingly and made choking smells. Madamoiselle was laying the table for dinner. The patron, a round fat French colonial, mopped his hot red face and bade me good evening. He puffed and sat down just tangent to his chair, and with deprecating shrugs apologised:

"You will have a dinner so bad, Monsieur, but what would you? There is no salad to be had, the good French wine is finished and the Algerian is *tellement mauvais!* The mutton was good yesterday, but there is no ice. In effect, it is a pig of a country!" And then, his Arab house painters would work only two or three days a week and then

loaf until they needed another handful of francs, and they demanded twice as many paper francs as silver ones, and there was no more silver. He was vexed with his wife who had been expecting for some time, and all the other hotel keepers' wives had had their babies weeks ago; he was quite out-classed. And his wife and he had just quarrelled for the fortieth time over the naming of the children (for they were sure they would be twins). He was for Lyauté and Mangin, the two generals who are the heroes of French Morocco, but Madame insisted that the holy saints, Pierre and Paul, should not to be slighted. If to add to his misfortune the *bon Dieu* should send that one child should be a girl, she should of course be called Anne, after a wealthy, but somewhat parsimonious Breton aunt.

"And if they are both girls?" I asked.

This was too much. He fled into the kitchen and poured out a voluble blend of Franco-Arabic remarks on the kitchen boy. I reconciled myself to the thought of the bad dinner, and mused longingly on Paris and Foyot's and settled down to study the perplexing ways of Arabic verbs. After dinner I could sit on the housetop and watch the moon rise behind the Koutoubia and listen to the faint rhythms of distant tom-toms in the thousands of Moorish courtyards, that would show far on toward

morning a tantalising mysterious glow of lantern light, and make me long to see from the inside the baffling oriental life going on all around me.

Then came my charming young friend Ahmet Ben Abbes, bringing another boy also on leave from the military school, Máhommet Ben Mís-saoud. With perfect Arab courtesy they each asked me six times how I did, and kissed their hands that had shaken mine. They had come to take me to dinner at Ahmet's house. We walked through an intricate maze of dark streets that twist and turn between high mud walls. We pass innumerable black doorways and I wonder what is behind them. The outside of all the houses is the same in Marra-kesh; a square low doorway in a high mud wall may lead to a cloth bazaar, a bath, a palace, a brothel, or a graveyard; and the passage leading in always turns at right angles after a few feet so that from the street one sees only a black mystery behind which may be love, misery, piety, luxury, or death.

One of the doors we pass is conspicuously barricaded from the outside and marked with the rudely painted good-luck sign—the five fingers of the hand of Fatima. Ahmet tells me in an awed whisper that the place belongs to a tribe of djinns. Someone once fitted the house up as a public bath,

but a newly married girl was drowned in the pool and her body could not be rescued; so the place was abandoned to the djinns and boarded up.

At length we turn into one of the doorways, first to the right, then to the left. A heavy door is opened by a slave with a lantern, who ushers us in. We cross a dimly lighted court, go through another passage; the slave lifts a heavy curtain, and we pass into an inner court. Candles in glass Moorish lanterns throw a soft light on old arabesque designs on window blinds and doorways—an intricate geometric weaving of pale blue, rose, and green, washed dim by years of strong sunlight. In one corner is a charcoal brazier, and beside it, a brass tea service glints through an embroidered veil covering. Thick mattresses and silk cushions are arranged invitingly on mats and gay carpets. Before stepping on the mats the Arabs slip off their yellow baboosches, and I take off my shoes, and we recline comfortably on the cushions. We wait, chatting indolently, for a long time. Then the entertainers arrive—a man and two girls. The girls unwrap two or three bundly outer garments, take off their veils, and sit opposite us. They are gaily dressed, one in yellow and one in bright magenta, and much bedecked with silver ornaments. One has the usual heavily sensual oriental beauty, too passively inex-



A MODERN MOORISH INTERIOR, MARRAKECH

A very few of the homes of the wealthy still retain something of the artistic glory of old Morocco in their richly designed mosaics and carved plaster arches and painted woodwork.



pressive to be beauty to western eyes. The other is slim and graceful, with a dark, disquieting loveliness. Her eyes are deep brown pools with depths very dark and very still, and they make you wonder what they are like when they are troubled. But you rarely see them, for she keeps them shadowed with their black fringed lashes. Her little chin is marked with thin blue lines of tattooing that adds an exotic charm, like the fascinating artificiality of Arabic art or the strangeness in African landscapes. She looks sad and a little tired as she warms her tambourine before the glowing charcoal in the brass perfume burner. A little slave throws a handful of fragrant powder in the burner, and the girl looks up and smiles across at me through the thin smoke, and my heart feels a delightful thrill.

¶ The other guests arrive, two friends of Ahmet and the caïd's son who drove over with us the other day. He has brought with him several servants and an elderly relative, white-bearded and patriarchal in dignity. With exquisite courtesy we exchange *Salamaleks* all round many times with kissing of hands, and the guests sit cross-legged on embroidered leather cushions or recline indolently on mattresses arranged in a circle. There is no noisy talk or the affected gaiety of an American party.

The guests talk or are silent as they choose; if one prefers to say nothing there is no embarrassment. The old patriarch sits quietly smoking his kief pipe, and a boy beside him, heels in the air and chin on hands, prattles on in a low tone.

It is now ten o'clock, the hour when Arabs usually dine in summer. The night air is pleasantly cool and the perfume from the brass burner fills the court with a vague eastern fragrance, languorous and strange; and overhead, the sign of Scorpio burns very bright. A black slave brings the tea service over to Ahmet's cousin, who makes the brew with much care and ceremony. He warms the silver teapot and the glasses, puts in a generous handful of tea and stuffs the pot full of fresh mint and big lumps of sugar. He tastes the decoction three times before he gets it to please him, and then the little glasses are handed round until everyone has drunk three. The man musician starts a barbaric melody on a European violin which he rests on his knee, and the girls strike an accompaniment on a tambourine and a pottery tom-tom. The strange rhythms beat in my blood and the unfamiliar intervals of the melody emphasise the sense of romantic differentness which is the alluring charm of the orient. There is nothing so transports the imagination as barbaric eastern music,

based on other scales than ours, leaping or sliding in other intervals, and springing from unfamiliar racial hearts. One knows the soul of Africa as different from that of the western world.

The banquet begins. A servant brings round a copper basin and pours rose water over our hands, and we pass the towel from one to another. The party is too large to eat from one dish and we break into two circles, each grouped about a wooden tray covered with a high peaked basket. The cover is removed, and a rich steam from chickens roasted with olives and lemon and peppery herbs keenly delights the appetite. The host breaks the loaves of bread and we all eagerly sop up the sauce, and seven or eight hands reaching at once tear the chickens apart. Conversation ceases and one hears only the sticky working of jaws or a request for water, the only beverage, which an attendant hands from one to another, in a brass bowl. It is a mark of courtesy for friends to put specially choice morsels into one another's mouths, and I as a stranger guest am continually crammed speechless.

Before the dish is half eaten, it is removed, and more chickens brought in, this time cooked with a white sauce of eggs, savoury and hot. Then follow a mutton stew, which is a meal in itself, and a *kouskous*, the national dish. This is a mixture of

unsuspected African vegetables boiled with a little meat and served in a wall of steamed white maize. I am painfully replete and my mouth is always full, yet I am reproached for my lack of appetite. And then comes a great roast of mutton flavoured with argan oil. There is a hint of savagery about the tearing asunder of a roast, that makes one shudder if he is no longer hungry. But the guests do noble work, and not more than half the dish is sent back uneaten to the women who prepared the banquet in some mysterious depth of the house. Finally, for dessert there is a huge platter of red grapes. A servant brings the rose water again and we perform thorough soapy ablutions of hands and mouth. "May Allah be praised!" murmur the good Moslems, and we sit back reclining on the cushions.

The music starts again, haunting strange arabesques of sound, that begin nowhere and end nowhere on some high note that leaves you expectant and unresolved. The melody pauses; the tom-tom beats on; then the melody recommences at a frenzied pitch. The pattern is so interwoven and intangible that the ear cannot grasp it, but the body is seized with its moods and beats time to the pulsations of the tom-tom. The voices of the women shrill to their highest notes and the rhythm beats faster and faster, and the guests clap their hands

in tune, and I find myself doing it too. There is a sense of communion in this communal rhythm, a fellowship of hearts that speech cannot so easily induce, an enchantment of spirit through mystic sorceries of sound.

In the intervals of pause we drink tea once more, much tea. I soon lose count of the glasses. The man with the violin sings an Arab love chant, at first in slow complaining notes, then in a mood of yearning desire, and ends in a wailing falsetto of despair.

How lingering is my punishment;  
Pain overcomes me;  
Long hours of waiting wither me away.  
(*O father mine, how sad is my fate!*)

My woe is caused by the contrary ways  
Of this gazelle.  
O my friends, in the harems of the great  
There is no beauty like that of this graceful creature.  
Oh how it brings me pain this separation,  
O thou with a melodious name.  
It makes all other lovely things seem naught  
And deprives me of reason and sense.  
(*O father mine, how sad is my fate!*)

Whoever sees her goes mad, he wanders in his wit.  
She is lovelier than the daughters of the ancient times,  
Nor have the latter days seen her equal.  
Thy eyelids are the colour of ink;  
They are fashioned like the bowed letters which the judge  
traces.  
Thy eyes are languorous  
And thy lashes like those of some dark Hindu.

Thy cheek is of roses and thy mouth like the jewel of a ring.  
 Thy voice ravishes my heart as the trilling of the nightingale.  
*(O father mine, how sad is my fate!)*

Thy lips are red as blood in a crystal chalice,  
 Or like the liquid kermess.  
 Thy face and thy brow, radiant white,  
 Shine with the brightness which streams from the heavens on  
 high.  
 I alone of all men have lost my happiness for Fatima.  
 He who has not loved  
 And who knows not the torment of passion  
 Has not tasted in this life the pain of ecstasy.

The whole world is busy with its affairs,  
 But I, alas, I have no thought  
 But of the eyes of a young gazelle.  
 The scholar gives his mind to his books  
 And busies himself with the turning of leaves;  
 The horseman devotes himself to the breeds of horses.  
 But what troubles me is my lovely neighbour around the  
 corner.  
*(O father mine, how sad is my fate!)*

I have become like a madman  
 Wandering in the streets of the joyous city of Tlemcen.

During the music, a group of funny little black children, the brood of the household slaves, have slipped into the court and stare wide-eyed at the festivities from a shadowed corner. The very little ones are getting drowsy, but any attempt to coax them to bed is met with loud wails, until at length they are carried in fast asleep. The music subsides for a while, the musicians chat among themselves,

and the guests fall into conversation. The feasting has made us all feel well acquainted, and they ask me many questions:

How much did I pay for my watch; and how much for my sun-helmet? Why do I wear glasses? The caïd's son wishes to know whether I have any false teeth; he has two gold ones he is extremely proud of. And I tell them something about American life, tall buildings, express trains, telephones, and steamships. They ask me why so many people are always moving about over the country? And what is the use of piling fifty stories on top of one another, instead of spreading them out over the ground in one huge palace with courtyards and gardens? These questions I found hard to answer. But Máhommet Ben Míssaoud who came from Fez and had lived at Casablanca and had seen a great deal of the French point of view, expressed scorn at his friends' simplicity. He explained that the Arabs of Fez were not so backward and understood these matters better. There was, however, a point he would like to ask: Was France a very rich and fertile country, well-watered and beautiful as a pasha's garden? "Well, then, why do the French come here and take our poor barren country away from us? Does the horse eating from his full crib covet the home of the wild goat in the rocks?"

Here was another I couldn't answer! Then the caïd's son asked whether it is true Americans have but one wife. I admitted that that is the usual number. "But they have many women and dancing girls?" I said that this was not a universal custom with us. "Are there no strong men among you like the Arabs? Are they——"

I was relieved from replying by the crashing in of the music which abruptly recommenced with the strident tones and quick beating rhythms of an exulting chant. The Arabs lost all interest in talking and fell under the intoxicating spell of their exciting music, for music is to them what alcohol is to the west, or narcotics to the far east. The tambourine and the tom-tom beat fast, the violin exuberantly vibrated in rapid running mazes of intricate sound patterns, and the girls' shrill voices followed the intangible theme, repeated it a dozen times, then lost it, found it, and repeated it again and suddenly stopped as abruptly as they began.

Then to a slow religious chant, the lovely Zara begins a stately dance. Her charming little bare feet pace the court slowly to and fro, and as she turns, her little heels, stained red with henna, twinkle beneath her bright saffron caftan. Her face is languidly immovable and her eyelids half closed, but the yellow lantern light throws shadows over

it as she moves, and makes it seem responsive to emotions. The dance ended, she sings a song, one of the gems of modern Arabic poetry, and as she sings, her face, before so passive, becomes mobile and changes with the fierce passion, the wild love-hate of the song. And her eyes, before so quiet, now lure one's heart and make it afraid.

The sun is setting, O Mahommed Ben-Soulouk,  
The sun is setting and the shadows are lengthening over the camp,  
Like a mourning veil over the face of a widow.

The horseman unsaddles his nervous limbed steed;  
The grooms and the tired hunting dogs  
Lie down before the tent;

The flocks come to the fold;  
And the mists begin to rise afar over the desert,  
Like the smoke above an encampment.

Dost thou hear, O Mahommed,  
Piercing the silence, the voice of the muezzin  
Calling the son of the Prophet to prayer?

Bow thyself down; pour water over thy weary limbs  
And turn thy face toward the place of sunrise,  
Toward the holy place of pilgrimage.

But the voice of the muezzin calls in vain;  
It is like a lute in the tent of a man whose ear is dead.  
The shadows lengthen more and more! and I

O my betrothed, O my lover,  
I am waiting for thee  
Even as the tigress waits for her young one.

My heart is gnawed  
Like the bones of those who die in the desert  
Along the route of the caravans.

My tears fall like the flowers of the almond trees  
When the sirocco blows from the desert.  
O come back my Mahammed, for I love thee.

I yearn for thee with a longing as wild and mad  
As the hyena who despoils tombs  
To devour the flesh of bodies.

But thou hearest me not, thou turnest away thy head,  
Even like the lion who passes by  
Disdainful and haughty before a sleeping man.

Thy heart is taken captive;  
Thy eyes that I adore are drawn to the eyes  
Of an infidel,

Eyes as blue as the graven turquoises on the bridle of thy  
steed,  
And thy hands tremble with desire when thou thinkest of  
her hair  
Golden as the grains of ripe wheat.

Thou lovest a Christian, O Mahomed!  
She has lured thee away from me, she has taken my life,  
She has taken thee, thee whom I love.

Thee for whom I have stained my nails with henna  
And my eyes with kohl.  
For she uses neither henna nor kohl.

Her skin is white as the burnous of a sheik,  
Her hand is cold  
As the serpent coiled round the arm of a snake charmer.

And I feel my bosom swell  
As in the spring time swells the torrent  
That comes down from the mountains.

I feel my hatred grow like the shadows when the sun is falling.  
For I hate her, I hate her, this infidel  
Who is no daughter of the Prophet and knows not Allah.

And I hope that she may suffer even as I suffer,  
And I hope her spouse may be lured away from her,  
And that her sons may die, slain by a blow from behind.

O that I might satisfy at once  
All my love for thee  
And all my hate for her.

O Mahomed, she must give me back the man that I love;  
O that I might drink from thy lips  
The blood of her heart!

The music kept on, the young Arab connoisseurs completely under its spell. The party continued all night long, the pauses in the music and the singing filled with indolent and casual conversation, but by two o'clock I was sleepy and rose to go. The leave-taking was long and ceremonious. Mahomet Ben Míssaoud accompanied me through the intricate tangle of lost black streets—utter darkness and mystery except for the wavering pool of dim light which the lantern, carried by a little black slave, cast just at our feet. Once we came to a huge barred timber gate that separated one quarter of the city from another. Mahomet with a kick or two wakes the gate-keeper, an ugly, half naked one-eyed negro giant. The lantern light gleams on his muscular back, as he strains over the Homeric

wooden bolt, and on the wall great grotesque shadows of his moving arms swell and dwindle. It is as though Rembrandt had painted Polyphemus barring his cave, or Samson tearing the gates of Gaza from their hinges. Our passage wakens a holy beggar, asleep just outside the gate. The horrible heap of rags blinks blindly and begins the penetrating perpetual cry of his waking hours—“Allah! Allah! Allah!” The cry pursues us up the hollow black street, and long after we have turned a corner we hear the mingled hope and despair of this piercing blind voice—“Allah! Allah!”

When I reach the hotel I go up on the housetop to smoke a cigarette and think about the glimpse that I have had of the Arab soul revealed in poetry, music, and the fellowship of hospitality. The vast inchoate city lies all around me in silent sleep except for the faint beat of a single tom-tom somewhere far off in the vague night. Already the first white glimmer of the “false dawn” makes the pale stars fade, and the Milky Way, the “River of the sky,” dies in a dim faint haze.

*Four*

**MINARETS AND PALACES**

Though the rose fade, yet are the thorns our lot;  
Though the light fail, yet is the ember hot;

    Though Robe and Priest and Presence all are gone,  
The empty Mosque at least we still have got.

OMAR KHAYYÁM.

## *Four*

### MINARETS AND PALACES

THE great square of Marrakesh, so strangely called the "Meeting Place of the Dead," has been the center of life in the city ever since the austere Almoravide sultan, Youssef Ben Tachefyn, of the tribe of the Lemtouna (May Allah be merciful to him!) came from "the Region of Fear,"\* and pitched his tent in the midst of the vast plain, and joined with his own masons in the building of a mosque, in the year of the Prophet 454, which is, in the reckoning of us Nazarenes, 1062. For centuries Marrakesh was the greatest city of western Islam, the capital of the Moorish Empire, to which war-like sultans returned after triumphant campaigns in Tunis and Portugal and Andalusia, Algeria and Soudan. Toward the end of the twelfth century, Yacoub El Mansour, "The Victorious," built two great mosques with marvellous minarets, a palace, and a fortified city, within the walls of Marrakesh, and then had spent but a fifth of the

\* i.e. The Sahara.

spoil from his victory in Spain. Ahmet El Mansour, the great Saadian sultan, brought precious marbles from Carrara,—paid for, pound for pound in sugar from the Souss,—artizans from Europe, gems from the east, and so much gold from the despoiled treasures of Timbuktu that he was sur-named “The Golden,” and enriched his beautiful capital. And then faineant princes who lived in decadent times built themselves gorgeous palaces and lived in barbaric dreams of opulence and splendid lusts.

The stories of all these wonderful things in the old past of Marrakesh, the glories, the conquests, the intrigues, and the eclipses, the comets and the plagues, the Arab historians have told in books with fascinating titles like, “The Chaplet of the History of the Prophets, Caliphs, and Kings,” “The Garden of Stray Leaves,” “The Recreation of the Camel Driver.” Even in the sixteenth century, in the day of its decline, Leo the African mar-velled at the grandeur of Marrakesh; he called it “one of the greatest cities which there are on earth, and one of the most noble in Africa,” even in his time a city of a hundred thousand homes.

And then its glory departed; Fez became the capital of the shrunken empire, and the metropolis of the south fell to decay. And now its gorgeous

palaces are dust, its great mosques are crumbling, their precious treasures are gone, and there remain but a few sadly beautiful minarets, old fountains, lovely fragments of mosaic and enamel, and exquisite forgotten tombs. If old ghosts of earthbound lovers of life wander in lost streets and deserted squares on these moonlit African nights, what heart-breaking regrets must be theirs for the beauty and action and glory and love that now are but ruined memories in silent places.

With these thoughts the strange name of the great square, "The Meeting Place of the Dead," takes a new significance. But in the morning hours the square is the meeting place of living Morocco, busy with picturesque commerce, a confusion of graceful flowing garments, red sheishias, white turbans, huge baskets on the heads of negro slaves, little asses buried under mountain of precious fire-wood, bundles of Moorish women swathed to the eyes in dirty white cotton, and reaching over all these heads, the long, bobbing necks of heavy-lidded, ill-natured camels. Here emerges from the crowd a dignified sheik in an immaculate long *djellaba*, that falls in elegant lines over his crimson saddle of carved leather; behind his white mule trot two of his ragged black servants on foot. A long train of pack asses loaded with sugar and tea

and cloth, headed patiently for the southern gate, on their way toward the defiles of the Great Atlas and the romantic regions beyond, meets another caravan loaded with jars of oil and bags of salt from the far-off Valley of the Souss.

This is the same commercial Morocco that in the middle ages enriched great princes who loved beauty and luxury, and made living itself a perfect art. But the monuments they have left, crumble and decay before the heedless eyes of modern Morocco, which merely murmurs that these changes are fated, that the glories of nations rise and fade even as the lives of men, and that all things must come to pass as they are written in the Book of God. This was what Abdullah Ben Hoseyn, a young Arab functionary in the employ of the Protectorate, said to me as we stood on the tower of the government office, which is on the great square, and looked out over the roofs of the city: "When Fortune has brought great happiness, it is followed by great sorrow; when a thing comes to be perfect, it soon begins to fade."

This complete sense of resignation to fate which is felt through all the pages of the Arab historians, permeates the whole life of Morocco from pashas and caïds to beggars and slaves, and contact with Europe cannot change it. In fact, the fatalism of



THE ROOFS OF MARRAKESH SEEN FROM THE PALACE OF  
THE GRAND VIZIER.

The low-roofed city spreads out miles in extent,—huddled cubes of rose-brown, mud-built houses, a confusion of square, flat house-tops and parapets, broken by sharp black shadows of walls and square doorways.



the east throws its influence even over western minds that live under its shadow.

This morning, as Abdullah and I step out on top of the wooden tower, from the comfortable half-gloom of the old Moorish house, we are drowned in glorious white sunlight; it envelops us in a blinding penetrating radiance; we seem to be breathing pure light. The low-roofed city spreads out miles in extent,—huddled cubes of rose-brown mud-built houses, a confusion of square flat house-tops and parapets, broken by sharp black shadows of walls and square doorways. Wedged here and there are low octagonal domes of marabout shrines, very white and very holy and mysterious; and everywhere in unexpected places are square minarets of countless mosques. Scattered in various quarters are six or seven large green patches, the famous gardens that stretch their opulence of fruit trees over great spaces of the city; and when a light wind ruffles the leaves of the olive groves, silvery waves sweep over their green sunny surfaces.

Dominating the whole city is the wonderful minaret of the Mosque of the Koutoubia, a superb square tower of proportions so perfect as to suggest an exact balance of solidity and graceful beauty. Its richly decorative windows are different on different sides, and have the bold design of the Almo-

hade builders, in contrast with the subtle elaboration of later Moorish art. Around the top, fragments of a band of rich blue-green enamel glow in the warm sunshine, a rare and exquisite green, wonderful as the sunlit curve of a wave breaking. On the lantern top flash four golden balls which an old historian says are apples of solid gold, the spoils of the victory of Alarcos.\* The mosque itself is very great in extent, but its green tiled roofs, four pyramidal and three of them square, seem crowded around the base of the great minaret. Koutoubia means the "Mosque of the Booksellers," for once the illuminators and makers of manuscripts had their stalls around its doors, but to-day the only bookseller in all Marrakesh is my friend the old Algerian with a whistling tooth, who sells wretched little printed leaflets of prayers.

One wonders what goes on in the great mosque, for no Nazarene is permitted to enter. Here in the past, the war against the infidel has been preached a hundred times, the last one only eight years ago; and one wonders what is going this Friday morning. I ask Abdullah, who is standing beside me, and his Semitic almond-shaped eyes smile vaguely as he answers, "Just prayers." But I wonder. For there is a mystery in the fanaticism of these puritan

\* 1195 A.D.

Moslems of Morocco, to us to whom religion matters so little that we boast of our tolerance.

Abdullah points out another great square minaret to the south. It is the Mosque of the Kasba, of the same period as the Koutoubia. The enamel around the top is a band of warm green turquoise, more perfect and more lovely than that of the larger minaret near us. Its colour is one that nature reserves only for a few exquisite gems, but which old Persian and Arab artists with princely extravagance lavished over their marvellous potteries, mosaics, and enamels. Abdullah tells me that the name of the artist who dreamed this colour and who planned the proportions of the Koutoubia has not been recorded. "But," he adds, "it has pleased Allah to preserve for us the names of the sultan's ministers, judges, secretaries, and doctors, and also the trivial fact that the sultan was ambidextrous, and that his teeth were far apart. Truly the ways of the Most Merciful are hard to understand!"

Then Abdullah points out reverently the many little sanctuaries of the city. They are lost among the surrounding roofs or buried behind cypresses and date palms, and I am never sure that I am looking in the right place, but their names fascinate me,—El Tebba, Mimoun Es Sahraoui, Moulay

Ali Ech Shereef, holy men who led most austere lives and who now doubtless enjoy the highest bliss in the Paradise of the Prophet. As we talked of them I could not help quoting the *rubai* of Omar,

They tell me houris throng in Paradise,  
And wine makes glad our hearts within the skies;  
Why then am I denied these joys on earth,  
Since wine and damsels there shall be my prize?

Abdullah frowned at this impertinence and said: "The Persians are not good Moslems; they are worse than unbelievers. They shall have their reward," and he went on pointing out shrines and mosques,—Ben Youssef, Sidi Abd El Aziz, Sidi Ben Slimane El Djazouli. I once peeped into one of these little sanctuaries at Rabat; it was filled with a hundred European clocks, the favourite votive offering of Moorish Moslems,—clocks of every size and every imaginable shape, and each one pointed to a different hour of the day. Time, after all, is a purely relative manner, and in Morocco it is no matter at all.

"And there," continued Abdullah indicating the very northern extremity of the city, where the red-brown roofs are lost in the green sea of palms beyond the walls, "is the very holy mosque of Sidi Bel Abbas. In that quarter live all the blind beggars of the city, and beyond them live hundreds

of lepers and sufferers of terrible diseases, miserable outcasts, all companions in woe.” And we pass down the wooden stairway out of the heat and glare of sunshine, stumbling and blinded, thinking of the glories of Marrakesh in the past. And one wonders what may be written in the Book concerning the fate of our own cities when the new world is old. Abdullah, whose ancestor three hundred years ago, as vizir to a great sultan, had ruled over this once splendid city, went quietly back to his desk in the Bureau, and I went to sit in the French café and watch the world go by. . . .

To one who loves oriental life there is a never wearying pleasure in wandering through the strange, winding streets and byways of Marrakesh. One passes a quarter of deserted, half-ruined houses with gaping vacant doorways and with withered grasses clinging to broken roofs; and then there are great desolate open spaces and rubbish heaps, where perhaps a lone ass brays miserably, and a very old and human-looking stork, perched on one leg, looks down from the top of a broken parapet and broods darkly on hidden mysteries. And then, unexpectedly, you discover a charming little mosque with a minaret built of glazed yellow bricks and surmounted by gem-like enamels of the

Prophet's colour. While you are under the spell of its charm a little black figure appears at the top, and, breaking the white noon-day silence with his beautiful high-quavering chant, proclaims 'the greatness and oneness of God. There is a strangeness in the imam's call that seizes the imagination like the romance of a distant light off an unknown shore in some foreign sea. And the ragged blind beggars, huddled in the few inches of shade under the mosque wall, stand up and grope for a landmark by which to orient themselves, and turning toward Mecca, they fall prostrate in prayer. Then they go to sleep again, and I wander on alone down the street, my footfalls smothered in the hot, powdery dust. And the dark cypresses and great gaunt palms stand uncannily immovable in burning sunshine, and though it is broad noon, the world is as silent as midnight. The mood of unusualness in the scene and the silence, brings a momentary disquieting glimpse of one's self as something remote and apart from this world of the old east; the strangeness, after all, is in me! These things belong here from eternity, while I am but a part of the ephemeral present.

As one wanders through these quarters deserted at midday, one never stops wondering what goes on behind the high walls. To the foreigner, native

life must always be a mystery. Even to a European who spends years in the east, the inmost oriental soul remains hidden behind walls and lattices that permit only an occasional glimpse. But even the external life has an infinite fascination, and perhaps its very baffling suggestiveness constitutes its unwearying charm.

One morning I turned aside from the thronging confusion of one of the busy little covered streets, lined with hundreds of shops, and found myself in the dim portico that leads to the Medersa of Sidi Ben Youssef, a very ancient mosque that has been turned into a Moslem college for training young men. At the end of the long corridor sat a guardian half asleep, occasionally exchanging a word with two friends reclining on the mat beside him. He rises with indolent dignity and ushers me into a beautiful old courtyard, and leaves me to enjoy it alone, in an atmosphere four hundred years from the present and a thousand miles from the noisy commerce of the little streets.

The cracked marble slabs of the pavement are worn unevenly by years and years of pious feet in shuffling slippers, and the curbing stones of the long glassy pool for ablutions, where cooing doves dip and admire, are chipped and broken, and their old whiteness stained with patches of black moss.

The marred arabesques of the walls are but vague hints of colour, and the carved patterns in plaster and the honeycombed Moorish intricacies and clustered stalactites pendant from corbels and false arches, are all tinted in palest old rose, with the wan delicacy of the cheeks of fading beauty. Huge beams of ancient blackened cedar carved with texts from the Holy Book support an upper gallery where students lodge; and below this, on two sides of the Medersa, are deep porticos carpeted with mats of reeds. The portico facing the east has an exquisitely carved prayer-niche; the other is the lecture hall of the learned Moslem doctors. This is the month following the fast of Ramadan, when all the young aspirants to learning are away on their vacation, and the college is deserted but for the mourning doves that coo from the high corbels and the spirit of beauty that never leaves old loveliness. A place to sit and listen to the doves and dream sad old tales and hear the tears of the world falling.

But I am not alone in the Medersa. In a corner of the portico on one of the shabby mats is a saintly figure reading. His rusty black *djellaba* is gathered around his crossed legs, and his scant turban forms a thin ragged halo about his shaven

head, bent over a very thumby book printed in microscopic Arabic character. The book is an anachronism, for such a figure should read only a manuscript. As I walk under the portico to trace the long bands of carved designs, I purposely pass close to him, and as he looks up, I salute him with deep respect. To my surprise he not only returns my salute, but begins a conversation.

"My son, thou lingerest long in our old Medersa. Thou dost well, for it has been said that he who admires a beautiful thing pays a tribute to God. We have few visitors here; we live apart. We see little of the world, for a scholar has no time. One of our wise men has said, 'He who seeks learning without study will attain his end when the raven becomes gray with age.' "

Then I asked the old man of the subjects of study in the college.

"When they come to us they must know much of the Holy Book by heart. Most of them are here to become proficient in our law, and to these I expound the texts on which the law is based. It is a long task and never ended."

I asked whether his students were eager and apt to learn, and he shook his head sadly and his furrowed parchment face remained impassive, but his

old eyes smiled as he remarked what I myself have often observed:

"Verily, my son, God covers the hearts of the young with a veil, and their ears are sharper to catch the twanging of lute strings than to hear wise words. The proverb is true which says that training youth is like chewing stones."

Then I asked him whether he was working on at his studies during the vacation period, and he replied, patting his book,

"This is my recreation. When I am free from expounding the law I have a little space to meditate on the vexing passages in the Holy Book."

"And would it be a courtesy, master, to inquire the subject of thy meditation this morning?"

"By no means, my son. I was considering whom the Prophet might mean by the Mysterious Stranger who built the wall of red hot iron and molten brass for the people who could scarce understand what was said. He is written of in the eighteenth chapter of the Koran."

I felt unable to continue the conversation in this direction, for this is a subject on which I have absolutely no opinion. And so I asked him to sum up the qualifications of a good Moslem. He answered by reciting this verse from the second chapter of the Koran,

"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces in prayer toward the East and the West, but righteousness is of him who believeth in God and the last day, and the angels and the scriptures, and the prophets; who giveth money for God's sake unto his kindred, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the stranger, and those who ask, and for redemption of captives; who is constant at prayer and giveth alms; and of those who perform their covenant, when they have covenanted, and who behave themselves patiently in adversity, and hardships, and in time of violence: These are they who are true and these are they who fear God."

I remarked that these were the qualities that we are taught make a good Christian, but he did not hear me. He seemed to have forgotten my presence; his eyes had the visionary gleam of one who seeks the mysteries that lie beyond "the flaming ramparts of the world." I bade him good-bye, and as I turned to leave him, I was startled by a whirr of wings behind me. I half expected to see the Mysterious Stranger himself, but it was only a brown dove fluttering down to drink from the old pool. . .

When one reads in the ancient Arab historians of the marvellous glory and luxury of the lives of

Moorish princes in the past, he hopes that in one corner may survive something more than a crumbling memorial of the days when these magic dreams were real. One may wander at sunset within the red crenelated walls that once enclosed the gorgeous palace of El Mansour the Golden, and find nothing to suggest the wonder of marble, mosaic, and enamel, within which men lived amid the luxuries of the Thousand and One Nights,—nothing but a waste of rubbish and withered reeds, where a camel driver and an unveiled Berber girl look into each other's animal eyes and make love among the ruins.\* But there is still a great modern palace in Marrakesh, of an exquisite beauty, with blends of rich colours and tones and moods to minister to a great Moor's love of sensuous life.

It was built, this harmonious beautiful dream, some twenty-five years ago by the Grand Vizier Ba Ahmet Ben Moussa, who at a dangerous time concealed the death of his sultan, until by a clever

\* The Palace of the Bédi was built in 1593. The author of the most poetic of all histories, the *Nozhet-Elhâdi* (*Recreation of the Camel Driver*), quotes dozens of verses the sultan's poets made on this marvel of beauty. One verse inscribed in glowing faience on its walls, read, "When I was built, the full moon did obeisance and prostrated herself before me; even now the disc of the sun is but as an earring in my ear!" But its glory was brief; a succeeding conqueror destroyed it in 1610. And the old historian concludes his account with: "Ever afterward the ground remained fallow as if it had never been a precious spot, and became a pasture for cattle, a refuge for dogs and owls. Thus we see of a truth that God raiseth up nothing upon the earth that he doth not afterward cast down."



#### THE GARDEN OF THE PALACE OF THE GRAND VIZIER.

Off from this eastern garden where Scheherezade might have woven her wild fantasies through perfumed languid nights, there are great state chambers of solemn richness, where sheiks and caids once thronged on high ceremonial days.



stroke the young Abd El Aziz was proclaimed. And during the minority of the foolish, worthless prince, this vizir, the hybrid offspring of a negro and a Jewess,—grotesque, ugly, gross, barbarously cruel and savagely ambitious,—reigned here as the real ruler of Morocco.

After the shrill white morning glare and the flickering shadows of the street, the Palace of the Bahia envelops one in a soft quiet light and an air of luxury and restful solitude. Here, at last, is the background of the Arabian Nights. It has no plan; it is a delightfully casual assemblage of courtyards, broad spaces, gardens, fountains, unexpected vistas and dim, hushed chambers. I follow the sleepy Arab attendant down a long green-latticed cloister, across a courtyard paved with white marble, and through narrow-arched passages into a marvellous tropical garden. Here is a luxuriant green profusion of tall, dark cypresses and mighty banana trees, with drooping fringed leaves that overshadow young almonds, lemons, and oranges loaded with green fruit, here and there a ripe one making a splash of colour, “Like golden lamps in a green night”; and everywhere, waxy-leaved vines tangle and twine and hang in festoons and strangle the trees like strange, immovable serpents. Broad walks of

mosaic in bold, coloured stars and hexagons lead to a little marble fountain in the center. Off from this eastern garden where Scheherezade might have woven her wild fantasies through perfumed languid nights, there are great state chambers of solemn richness, where sheiks and caïds once thronged on high ceremonial days. These rooms have no furniture but carpets, for the Arabs have no use for our cluttered confusion of tables, chairs, bric-a-brac, and pictures. The finely blended colours of beautiful modern rugs from Rabat and Fez, with an occasional wild bit of weaving from the mountains, are echoed in the arabesque designs on painted ceilings and in resplendant tile mosaics of cornices and portals. The eye revels in the gorgeous colour rhythms that are the glory of eastern art, and the mind wonders at the infinitely patient elaborateness and intricate symmetry.

We pass through more and more richly decorated rooms, more courtyards, corridors and lofty ornate doorways, till one is lost and bewildered with a sense of too much luxury. Everywhere I am amazed by marvellous, ever new patterns in faience and mosaic, repeated lines and stars of a hundred forms, and lozenges and polygons, all in bright green and yellow, orange, and rose and turquoise, balanced and blended in colour har-

monies. These wonderful geometric designs lure and fascinate the eye and create moods of romantic unreality, for this is an art quite remote from nature and wholly dissociated from idea or sentiment.

In one of the smaller, more intimate rooms I loiter for a while and lie on a divan heaped with soft leather cushions and striped silk scarves from Fez. The tall doors, painted in interlaced designs, are open; and beyond the deep shaded portico, the sunlight steeps the white paved court and the brilliant green tiles on the opposite roof. But the light within the room filters through two wooden screens delicately pierced with subtle designs, giving them a pale translucence, and softens the glowing colour in the Moorish carpets. I lie on my back and listen to the jet of water that spatters musically in the little basin meant for flowers, and I trace the recurrence of a certain little blue star in the repeated design of the high, painted ceiling.

And then I am led into the very heart of the lovely labyrinth, and given a glimpse into the apartments of the vizir's favourite, where in the painting of the ceiling and the faïence of the doorway there is the highest, most perfect artistry of the modern Moor. But all these lovely places are hushed and empty; there is an atmosphere of dead

joy that has gone with the roses of yesterday. I go through these beautiful vacant rooms like the hero of the Second Kalendar's Tale wandering through the great underground palace, and I look about for the hidden prince whom I am fated to slay.

And in this beautiful palace, as everywhere else in Morocco, there are already signs of fading beauty and decay. The gifted artizans who built it are not yet dead, but the painted stucco has begun to crumble, the marbles of some of the fountains are cracked, and the fine designs on doorways and shutters have become a little pale and washed; for the delicate beauties of Moorish art have in them a fragile evanescence that cannot withstand the wearing down of time. The Moslems build, but they never repair.

There is no place in Marrakesh that so fills one with this sense of the impermanence of Moorish culture and the transitory greatness of the Moroccan empire as the long forgotten and neglected mausoleum of the Saadian sultans. I visited it one hot, indolent July morning with the grave young philosopher Abdullah from the government office. We sauntered slowly through the quiet sunny streets, now grown so familiar with their rose-

brown walls, and rose-brown dust, a straggling palm, the sleeping children, and the dreaming beggars. "A land where all things always seemed the same." And as we walked, Abdullah told me terrible stories of these Saadian sultans who reigned in the decadence of Morocco, from the middle of the sixteenth century on, for a hundred bloody and turbulent years. It was a tale of rivalries, jealousies, harem intrigues, of poisoning, strangling, the gouging out of eyes, wholesale murder, and ghastly blood-madness; fearful deeds that had for their setting the luxury of the old east, the wealth of Ormus and of Ind. Every accession to the throne meant a fresh civil war, rebellions of ambitious factions, the slaughter of recalcitrant vizirs, the murder of nephews and brothers. Some of these princes wrote books of prayers, or dabbled in poetry, or sought the hidden secrets of alchemy, and some spent their lives in the wild joys of the wine cup and the harem. One of them murdered a rival relative, seized his throne, and married his sister; and she, like Judith, stabbed him in his drunken sleep, and then married his son. And so the tale went.

"By Allah," said Abdullah, "the chroniclers had to write fast in those days to get all down! And

it was the will of Allah that these princes should all die by the hand of violence, and here they are behind that old wall."

We had come into the part of the town called the Kasba which was once a fortified imperial city within the city. Beyond the clay wall rose the square tower of the Mosque of Moulay Yazid with its wonderful band of turquoise. Within the mosque enclosure, hidden away in a walled desolation of humble graves, amid heaps of debris and gaunt dusty palms, is the loveliest gem of art in all Morocco.

With no transition from the wretched ugliness without, we pass through a ruined Moorish arch immediately into a sombre twilight of sad magnificence. Tall stained marble columns clustered in threes and crowned with square capitals hold up an arcade of great and small arches darkly over-canopied by a high pyramidal roof of ancient cedar. Every surface of the marble capitals, of the arches dripping with stalactites, and of the lofty, gloom-shadowed walls, is covered with intricate lacy carvings in regular designs like the million little hexagons in honeycombs. Fragments of coloured mosaic squares are scattered over the floor or heaped in corners; a band of arabesques of a thousand

coloured stars and triangles and polygons runs around the lower wall; and high above, in the over-glooming roof, gleam little specks of tarnished gold. Half imbedded in the floor lie the long sarcophagi of old marble, yellow as aged ivories, minutely carved and wrought like precious reliquaries. Over the walls and round the tombs, run long legends of ancient Cufic letters intertwined and marvellously interlaced, words woven into strange patterns that blend into beautiful design.

And even the meaning of the inscriptions in Moorish art is as purely romantic as the designs. As we feel our way about in the soft sad light, Abdullah reads me here and there a phrase which he can decipher, and he smiles as he recalls the things he told me about these sultans.

“Light of the Century, King of the Age, Most Fortunate by the Grace of Allah!”

“The fire of his hospitality never went out; he was the refuge of those in trouble, and came to the aid of the doctors and saints.”

“May the Most Highest crown him with rewards in the Eternal Garden, in the midst of the most beautiful houris!”

The minutely carved letters that cover the tomb of the Golden El Mansour read,

Here is the resting place of one who made Glory itself to be proud,

Ahmed, whose standards were ever victorious, and who knew all the splendours of the world!

O Divine Pity, come roll thy waves over him forever,  
Water this tomb with the rain of thy loving-kindness that hath no end!

Perfume this earth with a balm as lasting as his memory.  
At the very moment of his death these words were true:  
Verily he rests in the bosom of the Almighty Lord of Earth and Heaven.

Off from this central mausoleum are other chambers, where one vaguely glimpses columns and dim-lovely arches and more marble tombs of princes and old kings. And some are the tombs of queens whose beauty old poets have sung, and others of young children, the ill-fated offspring of royalty, murdered by jealous successors. And I peer blindly into one great chamber utterly dark, dark as the night of nothing, cold as the dreams of the dead.

From the peace and the shadowed beauty of the shrine we pass out again into the sunlit desolation of walls and graves. And reluctantly I slip back into present reality after an hour of dreaming in the terrible and beautiful past called up by these tombs, "silently expressing old mortality, the ruins of forgotten times." Morocco no longer feels the intense passion for life and power, and the joy of creating beauty that was hers in the past. The

Moors live on in their decadent present, and only strangers remember their former greatness and admire their old monuments. As it was written in the Book of God, the cycle of their glory is over and the fatal period of the nation has come. "They trampled upon the flowers of the earth, the men of old; the people of to-day, they live in the autumn of time."



*Five*

THE THURSDAY MARKET

A merchant shall hardly keep from wrong doing;  
and a huckster shall not be acquitted of sin.

A nail will stick fast between the joinings of  
stones; and sin will force itself in between buying  
and selling.

ECCLESIASTICUS.

"It is naught, it is naught," saith the buyer, but  
when he hath gone his way then he boasteth.

PROVERBS.

## *Five*

### THE THURSDAY MARKET

IF the idle visitor at Marrakesh, a little surfeited with its faded charm and its strange mediævalism, wishes to plunge back for an evening into modern life, he has merely to go to the French suburb of Gueliz. Here a little more than a mile from the main gate of Marrakesh, he may find curious colonial types, interesting drinks, and American jazz music in an indiscreet and somewhat tawdry background. One may skip five hundred years by an easy transition in an archaic hack, driven by an ugly and venomous old Spaniard, whose ruby nose is a precious jewel in the flaming bonfire of his Bardolph face. The town is not a half dozen years old, but neatly planned, laid out in long avenues planted with eucalyptus and palms, among which stand little scattered houses of plain stucco, very white and clean.

We rattle on past unpretentious shops with a scanty display of European hats and boots and soap and finery, all very expensive and quite out

of place in the middle of the desert, but of a wonderful fascination for the little Arab boys who peer at these windows of puzzling mysteries. And then there are windows with cheerful rows of bottles, a pleasing sight after interminable participation in tea and mint, with the abstemious Arabs. As the two or three cafés we pass are not very lively, I drive to the edge of town, dismiss my wicked driver after some discussion conducted with the aid of the more pregnant expletives in three languages and two religions, and walk off into the sunset.

The vast plain glows with light from a gorgeous crimson sky that fades upwards into delicate blendings of pale rose and warm green, in which, like a white, holy sanctuary lamp, hangs one great brilliant planet. The hill of Gueliz, behind which the flaming sun has just dropped, stands out black and sharp with its little square fortified kasba; and nearby are two tall silhouetted date palms, lonely and motionless, waiting for the evening wind from the sea. Far off across the plain slowly passes a caravan, a confusion of bobbing necks and twinkling legs, very black and clear-cut against the vivid crimson. The warm air is luminous with ruddy gleams and reflected splendours of a dream world drowned in warm colours and alive with fancies. From these glorious moods of the myste-

rious desert were born the wild super-realities of Arabian romance, the magic of which seems real in this sunset world.

Down the long road which turns suddenly from behind the little hill come three dark specks, three galloping horsemen, perhaps three kings from Cufa or princes from Ispahan. I am disappointed to find them merely *chasseurs d'Afrique*, very superior and smart in their brilliant red, yellow, and blue, the dignity of their dark features enhanced by huge brown turbans and neck cloths that flutter as they ride. I turn and follow the retreating horsemen back to the town, now glowing with rosy reflections from white houses among darkened green eucalyptus leaves. At the end of the long avenue that leads to Marrakesh the Koutoubia stands sunset-flushed above the dark palms, and overhead appear more stars in the deepened azure of the evening zenith.

I am still dazed by the sunset; the people in the cafés seem strangely unconscious of this daily miracle of the desert. I choose a café that sometimes has ice for the *apéritifs*, and sit down among these colonials, who have brought over with them the French custom of spending their before dinner hour chatting on the pleasant terrace of a café. They are mostly types from the provinces, rougher

in appearance and with much more energy than the folk one sees in the cafés of Tours or Toulouse; more men than women, as one might expect, and among the women a lack of smartness and chic. French officers are gaily chatting at little tables, groups of traders are playing cards over their whiskey and soda, and the proprietors of the neat little shops are enjoying their usual evening's animated discussion of the shortcomings of the government. One apoplectic little barber is endangering his life through the intense emotion aroused in him by a speech of Lloyd George quoted in a Parisian paper seven days old. Strolling quietly past the café go two graceful young Arabs in clean white djellabas and turbans, holding each other by the hand and not speaking a word.

Presently, my friend Monsieur Louis Lapan-déry drops into the café, greets a half dozen acquaintances, and sits down at my table. He is a big manly chap of about forty, with long black moustaches and deep eyes that look straight at you. He has spent ten years in the French colonies, hunting big game in Nigeria, prospecting in Senegal, and trading in Morocco. Last year he was five months alone in the northern slopes of the Atlas mapping the territory for the colonial government. He is of the energetic and adventurous type of

colonist that has made the white race dominant in Asia and Africa. A stout royalist, he reads *L'Action Française*, and never refers to the present government without sharp irony and a contemptuous twirl of his moustaches.

"Look here, monsieur," he said in a tone of hurt pride, pointing to an article in his beloved *Action*, "a French officer is given Le Légion d'Honneur for flying for twenty minutes over the mountain behind Fez, but I, a mere colonial sergeant, am sent to live five months among the wild mountain Berbers and receive not so much as a *merci bien!* for my work!" Monsieur Lapandéry's opinions never go half way, and his decisions are quickly formed and resolute.

We talked for two hours in the warm twilight over many glasses of Vermouth, or perhaps I should say that he talked and I listened. Possibly it was because I am a good listener that he invited me to go along with him on an adventure he was just planning. He talked of the rich forbidden country of the Souss, south of the Great Atlas, a region where the Shelluh Berbers for centuries have maintained an independence only nominally under the Sultan's control. No trading with Europeans has been permitted there since the Portuguese forced their way in in the fifteenth

century. In modern times it has been visited by a half dozen travellers and by one or two trading expeditions that came to grief. In 1914, Mr. Holt, formerly American consul at Tangier, wrote of the country as the "Unknown Souss,"\* a region less explored than the very heart of Africa. Since the French have extended the actual Protectorate to the foot of the Atlas, a few prospectors, disguised as Arabs, have ventured over the mountains, but the mysterious plain is still as shut out from the world as it was a hundred years ago.

Monsieur Lapandéry was going into the Souss with the idea of buying up as far as possible this season's almond crop, or at least of making some trading connections among the Soussi before the French Protectorate formally occupied the region and opened it up to commerce. And there was always the chance of adventure; there might be no almonds, but there was fascinating native life to see and there were sure to be difficult situations, stubborn, grasping chieftains, and probably bandits. Olives and almonds were nothing to me, but unexplored mountain trails and an unknown country from whose bourn few travellers had returned

\* "That portion of Southern Morocco known as Sūs (South), with the exception of certain coast towns, is probably as little known as any spot of similar size on the face of the earth." "Morocco the Bizarre," p. 180.



JITTLE KHIRA.

This eight-year-old Berber child accompanied the expedition across the Great Atlas. Her charm and tact helped get the party through some difficult situations. The picture was taken in the heart of the mountains, against a bower of blooming rose laurels and vines that trail over strange formations of porous volcanic stone.



appealed strongly. I was a little tired of dreaming over palaces and mosques, and during these long afternoons when the thermometer stayed for hours at a hundred and twenty degrees in the shade, the snowy peak of Djebel Mskrin, gleaming through the haze fifty miles away, seemed like the vision of heaven to Dives. Nothing could be more alluring than the thought of a trip into those dream-like mountains. I at once accepted Monsieur Lapandéry's invitation and we went to his house to dinner.

When we arrived about nine o'clock, his pretty Berber wife had ready a most excellent meal of duck, roasted native fashion with peppers and herbs in a covered earthen dish, and also a salad and a choice melon. Madame Lapandéry was very charming in her gay native costume and innumerable bangles and bracelets. She was Europeanized to the extent of eating with her husband and his friends, but she had the Moslem woman's modest manner in the presence of the "superior" sex in whose life she is merely a graceful and ornamental recreation. Monsieur's attempts to make a French woman of his wife were amusing. He blustered and stormed to get her to eat with an unaccustomed fork or to drink a glass of wine, and she quietly smiled and in her soft musical voice, declined, or

perhaps, to please him she would take a tiny sip. And the more he bullied, the more she adored him!

His lovely little eight-year-old stepdaughter, Kbira, also ate with us. She was a full-blooded Berber child brought up in a village on the slopes of the Atlas until two years ago, when Monsieur Lapandéry began to train her in European manners. As he soon saw the quickness and adaptability with which she added little western courtesies to her innate oriental charm, the education of this fascinating child became the chief interest of his life. She has an instinctive fineness of manner and a winning childlike way, and talks French like a little Parisienne. Her eyes sparkled gleefully over Monsieur Lapandéry's jokes, and she accepted his blustering reproofs with roguish attempts to be serious.

The Lapandéry household was very numerous; in fact, it was a whole clan. The two-roomed cottage was only large enough for him, his wife, and Kbira and the three dogs, who quarrelled over the bones under the table; but the back yard was thickly populated with relatives. There was Si Lhassen, the silent patriarchal father-in-law, his incredibly old and wrinkled wife, a second rather pretty daughter, and the daughter's shiftless young husband, who deserted her from time to time and

came back when hunger drove him to fidelity and to his brother-in-law's hospitality. Then there was Lhassen, the younger, a useless young oaf of fourteen, and an amusing brown baby that rolled around naked over the mats and was constantly smothered with noisy kisses by the three women. And finally there was Kino, the horse, and a mule or two. That is all the household I recall.

The plans for the trip were simple. We should merely buy two or three pack mules at next Thursday's market, stock up with a few provisions, and try to get formal permission from the Bureau de Renseignements. If the Bureau, as was very probable, would not grant us permission, we should slip away without it. As old Si Lhassen was himself a Shelluh Berber from the Souss, he would be our guide and would doubtless be useful in helping us get on with his tribesmen among whom he was held in respect for his great age and for his experience as a far traveller. Little Kbira would go with us as the interpreter and diplomat of the party when we reached the mountains, where Arabic is no better understood than French. Si Lhassen did not know a word of any language but his native Shelluh dialect, except his five daily prayers in Arabic, which he repeated as so many mystic, in-

prods two ungainly beasts along toward the market; and asses with panniers bulging with curious long cucumbers, vivid green squashes, and purple egg-plants, squeeze their way doggedly through the throng. Both sides of these streets are lined with thousands of little stalls where the proprietors squat in the midst of their wares, some of them busily plying their craft, others shouting for custom, and others quietly waiting for what business Allah may be pleased to send. The leather workers are surrounded with beautiful soft skins of bright yellow and crimson and green; their stalls are lined with rows of gay little slippers, exquisitely embroidered in gold thread, with cushions of leather carved in intricate designs, and with pouches made to hang from the wearer's shoulder by long crimson cords. And down in the dirt before these shops, goat skins are spread out to be made soft and supple by the tread of a thousand passing feet. Here are wood-workers making little boxes and Moorish trunks covered with coloured paper, and embroiderers of silk caftans working in semi-darkness, and spinners of cotton surrounded by three or four naked children who hold big skeins of cord.

The grocers have their wares heaped up in baskets ranged in rows sloping up to the back of the

stalls, where the shopkeepers sit lazily with their knees drawn up; and when a buyer comes they reach down with long-handled ladles and scoop up a measure of ripe olives, dates, tea, or dried peppers, and empty them into his leather pouch. Then there are stalls that display cauldrons of tar, grease, and liquid soap; and butchers' shops hung about with very uninviting strings of viscera and gory sheeps' heads with big corkscrew horns. Down one street are rows of blacksmiths shoeing nervous horses or ill-tempered mules with three legs carefully tied to pegs in the ground; and in the black interiors of these sheds the shooting white sparks from the pounded iron light up in flashes the strained faces of two or three wretched boys pumping at primitive bellows. And here and there in the gloom of the shops are lonely white faces of kief smokers, half awake to sad delusion, dumbly yearning for their forgotten dreams.

I stop for a moment to look into a cloth bazaar, a long lofty hall with merchants' booths all around. They are hung with silk caftans of gorgeous colours and women's girdles of native silk in crimson and yellow. In one corner sits a perfume seller with his handful of strange shaped vials of precious exotic scents, attar of roses gathered in pashas' gardens, amber, incense, and gums brought from

comprehensible sounds, and Monsieur Lapandéry was but imperfectly acquainted with Shelluh.

The fearful heat of July and August is, of course, a terrible handicap in exploring Morocco in the summer, but for a journey through the Atlas this is really the best time. In the winter, the snows make the higher mountain passes dangerous, and in the spring, floods make the rivers often unfordable for weeks. And then the question of food for the animals is important. As the caïds sell all their surplus grain supply shortly after it is harvested, the peasant population have barely enough through the year for their own needs. We were undertaking our journey right in the middle of harvest time, when we could count on supplies along the way.

We discussed all the details of the trip until after midnight, over our coffee and wine, and arranged to meet at the Souk El Khemis early next Thursday morning to buy mules, panniers, and trappings. I hailed a sleepy hack jingling by toward the city, and drove down the moonlit avenues of mysterious shadows back to the hotel. The jazz music and noisy laughter from two or three French cafés jarred with crude incongruity, for I was dreaming of wild Atlas scenery and possible

adventure in the strange, remote life of the unknown Souss. . .

The following Thursday morning, the day of the great market at Marrakesh, I was up with the sun and off for the Bab El Khemis, the extreme northern gate of the city, just outside of which the buyers and sellers of camels, horses, mules, asses, goats, and sheep meet and bargain on market days. Thursday morning is the time to see Marrakesh; from dawn till hot noon the crooked maze of streets in the heart of the city is thronged with thousands of busy buyers from all central Morocco.

I cross the square of the Djemaa El Fnaa, and plunge into the labyrinth through which I eventually hope to emerge in the region of the Souk El Khemis. These streets are protected from the sun by flimsy roofs of poles, thatched meagrely with dried palm branches which permit the sunlight to stream through in checkered spots, and these sharp lights and shadows, broken by the innumerable faces and garments of the rapidly moving crowds, constantly give the effect of flickering cinema pictures from old scratched films. The throng is closely packed in the narrow ways and I can progress no faster than they wish to move. A camel driver, always shouting, "Bâlek! Bâlek!"

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beyond the Sahara. Through the crowd rushes an old clothes seller holding over his head a magenta and gold caftan, and shouting his price in a voice that can be heard above the hubbub and noise. In one corner a story-teller begins to recite, and bearded merchants drop their affairs and mingle with the listening circle of idlers. Among them are three or four closely veiled women evidently of the better class, who have come to buy finery, and in the front of the circle are several young Berber boys who are fascinated by the story-teller, though they can understand but little of his Arabic tale. He is reciting extracts from the famous epic of Antar, which for eight hundred years has been the delight of the Arabs from Bagdad to Spain. One may hear it to-day from the children of Cairo and Algiers. When he comes to the lyric passages the story-teller sings in a high chant. Here is a famous place, the complaint of Antar who has been cruelly separated from his beloved Ablla:

Rest has fled from my eyes and tears stream down my cheeks.  
Ablla has borne away with her all my happiness and my sleep.

My pain is as great as the time was short  
When I saw her heart shining in her eyes.  
Alas! how these farewells lived over and over again,  
And these endless separations,  
Tear my very soul.  
O tribe of Beni-Abess, how I long for thy tents

Where my eyes saw her smile,  
So soon to vanish!  
What tears have I vainly shed for the exile of my beloved!  
To make me live and to die happy  
I only ask for one fleeting moment,  
Such as a miser might grant  
To the eye of a stranger admiring his treasure.

The story-teller ends his episode, collects a few coins from his pleased listeners, and moves off; the merchants go back to their bargaining.

A little farther on is a marabout's shrine, within which two or three women, muffled in white, are crouched before a tomb covered with a black pall. They are praying for children, for love, for revenge, for deliverance from all baleful spells of vexing djinns; and all around them sounds a complex ticking chorus of votive clocks. The supernatural is always closely interwoven in the texture of this oriental life; its presence is hinted everywhere, in phrases, in gestures, in talismans, and signs, in the very form of the hinges of the great studded doors you pass in the streets. Even while I reflect on this, I hear a low monotonous chant growing louder as it nears. Six thin-faced pilgrims in rusty black garments and dirty turbans come swinging along, staff in hand, chanting a strange song. They have come on foot from some far northern town, across the burning Bled to pray

in Marrakesh at her hundred shrines. They seem very happy, and, I fancy, it is not only with the peace of mystic promises in their hearts, but also with the joy of romantic wanderers whom the lure of otherwhere leads on, and the delight of seeing distant cities and strange lands.

And I, joyful as the pilgrims, go on along the winding streets, peering into barbers' shops, busy grain markets, inn-courtyards full of loaded camels making hideous noises; and then at a turn in the street I come upon a great fountain. It is divided into three arched bays of carved and painted plaster in subtle designs faded and old, and over an arch is written, "Drink and admire!" Groups of veiled women, with round earthenware jugs balanced on their shoulders, stand gossiping by the dark pools, and ragged water-carriers are filling hairy goat-skin bottles, and half a dozen boys are splashing one another and laughing.

This is very charming to look at, but I realise that I have lost my way. I persuade a funny little urchin to take his feet out of the fountain and guide me to the Souk El Khemis. He trots on ahead, and with him go four more little imps in case he should lose his way. In about a half hour I and my tattered retinue reach the northern gate beyond which the market is already assembling.

The red-brown, sun-steeped walls, crumbling and old, shut the city in, and leave a desolate waste without. A few wretched palms grow sparsely at the edge of a dry gully half filled with refuse. Four ghastly beggars, all blind, squat on a mound near the gate. They are a holy confraternity. Their leader, gaunt, long-haired, majestic in his rags, has about him something of the nobility of Job sitting on the ash-heap outside the city of Uz. His seared, sightless face is lifted above the world, and his hollow voice, calling on sacred names, vibrates in the ear like a prophetic warning. His followers sit motionless and dumb, with the supreme resignation of Islam. Over the whole place and over the plain beyond rises a reddish dust from the feet of the moving crowd and the hoofs of a thousand animals. And through this haze, over the city to the far south, looms, dim and half seen, the jagged line of the great Atlas.

In the shade of a huge sycamore beside a muddy little stream, a group of natives are sipping coffee. Here Monsieur Lapandéry is waiting for me. We stand a while and watch the drovers herd hundreds of black goats and thick-fleeced sheep in one part of the market space. Toward another quarter, near the old walls, the traders with asses to sell, drive their patient and sometimes ridiculously

stubborn little beasts. From two directions, off across the brown plain, come two very large herds of camels at an ungainly, clumsy trot. They meet in the centre of the market in an awkward confusion of legs and necks, with much beating and angry shouting on the part of the drivers. And in and out of the groups of animals and bargainers ride little knots of Arab horsemen showing off their fine steeds.

They all draw off toward one point, and the crowd divides and leaves a broad lane for these splendidly picturesque cavaliers to pass through, one after another. Down the long lane they charge at top gallop, hands and reins held high over their heads, riding whips stuck in their teeth, shouting wild Bedouin cries. One by one these magnificent children of the desert rush by like meteors, and I catch a fierce glance, a flash of white eye-balls and gleaming teeth; and their long striped bur-nouses stream and flutter in the wind, and the pounding hoof beats re-echo over the plain. Now a group of riders engage in a loud dispute, and their horses, feeling the excitement, nervously toss their heads and caracole restlessly. To decide the point, two prepare for a race, and draw apart with a third as starter. One Arab rides a finely built iron grey, marked with an enormous ugly brand;

the other has a superb white mare that walks as though she loathed touching the ground. At a shout, they start and rush gloriously down toward the goal, yelling barbarically, their faces in a wild fury fitting to a Moslem host charging the infidel. The white mare comes in ahead and the dispute is settled.

Monsieur Lapandéry and I go over to a busy crowd buying and selling mules. We engage the services of a broker to help us select and to do the bargaining for us. Mahommed assures us that he knows this morning's market thoroughly and that he is a rare bargainer. One glance at his villainous eye, for he has but one, is enough to convince me of the truth of his last statement. Mule after mule comes by, pushed or tugged or otherwise persuaded; some smart and young but with evil in their hearts, others declining sadly in the vale of years, but most are already in the sere and yellow leaf, and time has dealt ill with them. The owner of each shouts out his price, and occasionally a buyer offers two-thirds of this; then follows a torrent of praises, of disparagements, of haggling, until at length a bargain may be struck.

"It is a pearl among mules and can keep pace all day with a horse and eat less than doth a fly!"

"Belike, belike, but he seems to me to go haltingly in his hind legs."

"No, by Allah! O Prince of Merchants, do but try him."

So the Prince of Merchants attempts to leap astride the big pack-saddle, but is promptly kicked in the stomach. The bystanders roar and the bargain is off. Another ragged old trader is exclaiming,

"The price is not a tithe of his value, but I am a poor man and Allah has visited me with misfortune and I lack money."

"But a hundred and thirty *douros* is a very great price to pay for a mere carcass." And so they wrangle.

Meanwhile, Monsieur Lapandéry with the aid of Mahommed the broker has bought two pack mules, and the money is paid and the sale duly recorded by the scribe sitting under the sycamore tree. Then after much search among the animals for sale, one is found for me to ride. She is a beautiful creature, verily a pearl among mules; her eyes are deep as the wells of Bou Aza; her mouse-coloured flanks are soft as silk woven by the girls of Fez; and her velvet ears are long and pointed like the leaves of the rose-laurels that bloom in the valleys! As for her disposition, I have owned her five min-

utes and she has neither bitten nor kicked; so I have named her Aziza, which among the Shelluh Berbers means "ma chérie." I also buy a crimson saddle such as a pasha may ride, with elegant trappings and stirrups inlaid with silver, worthy of the beautiful and, I hope, gentle Aziza. I am very eager to mount my prize and ride grandly away with her, but prudence suggests it were better to wait till there are not so many spectators.



*Six*

TOWARD THE GREAT ATLAS

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert, Lo you, there,  
That hillock burning with a brazen glare;  
Those myriad dusky flames with points aglow  
Which writhed and hissed and darted to and fro;  
A Sabbath of the Serpents, heaped pell-mell  
For Devil's roll-call and some fête of Hell.

THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT.

## *Six*

### TOWARD THE GREAT ATLAS

THE next morning, with a wild crimson dawn for a background, and Monsieur Lapandéry's numerous household for spectators, I made the acquaintance of my she-mule, Aziza. She began by very deftly kicking me off twice, and then she tried bucking, with considerable success. She was a temperamental lady, but by a judicious combination of patting on the nose and kicking in the ribs with my inlaid silver stirrups, we came to an amicable understanding, and eventually she proved to be "a gentle beast and of a good conscience."

The Bureau de Renseignements had refused to give us permission to go beyond the limit of the actual Protectorate which extends at present only to the northern foothills of the Great Atlas. They informed Monsieur Lapandéry that the country beyond was not safe for Europeans, and that until the military occupation was extended, all permission to prospectors and traders would be refused, because some difficulty with the natives might force

the government to premature military action. This decision did not deter us; we had expected it. We were going without permission.

We set out from Gueliz at about six o'clock, just as the African pipes were skirling and the big drums were booming for the daily morning concert of the Spahis. With these barbaric martial rhythms vibrating in our ears we rode down a newly planted avenue of young eucalyptus trees, past the straggling houses on the outskirts of the French town, the last we should see of western civilization, and started southward across the great arid Bled. Aziza took the trail and fell into a good steady pace. When she heard her eccentric rider bursting forth into

Non eget Mauris jaculis nec arcu,

she showed a genteel surprise, and, like her Words-worthian relative,

with motion dull  
Turned on the pivot of her skull  
Her long left ear,

but she soon became reconciled even to my singing and decided to bear it with Moslem resignation. A few clouds that had blown over during the night from the sea, which is only about one hundred and thirty miles away, kept off the heat and glare for the first few hours of the journey.

Old Si Lhassen led the way, riding a tough wiry little mule that did not seem at all troubled by the weight of two bulging *chouari* bags between which the old man sat, his shrunken bare legs hanging over one side, and his old babouches dangling from the tips of his toes. Then came little Kbira perched between the panniers of another mule. The trip was a lark for her; her eyes were always laughing as she hummed French nursery tunes her step-father had taught her. From time to time she shrilled "Arrr Zit!" to the mule and poked his neck with a stick to make him keep pace with her grandfather's mount. Beside her walked the young Lhassen, her fourteen-year-old cousin,—stupid and useless, but always ready to show his white teeth in a smile. Now and then, as we passed a clump of cacti, he would pluck some yellow ripe Barbary figs, roll the prickles off in the dust with his calloused bare feet and hand the sweetish seedy fruit up to us as we rode. They were not very good but they served to moisten our dry throats when the hot sun began to tell. Monsieur Lapandéry and I rode side by side, he astride of Kino, his much prized horse. At first we chatted idly in the gay mood in which one begins an adventure, occasionally bursting into snatches of old songs, or halting a moment for a cigarette. But old

Si Lhassen rode steadily on, never turning his wrinkled and gravely patriarchal face from the looming outline of the Great Atlas range.

We left behind, the brown, towered walls of Marrakesh, the confusion of huddled flat house-tops, the Koutoubia tower, and the turquoise-tipped minaret of the Kasba mosque. As we look back, the city is swallowed up in the great green oasis of palms bathed in painful white sunlight.

We pass numbers of wide mouthed wells, which tap the vast system of underground conduits that bring water from the hills to feed the fountains and garden reservoirs of Marrakesh. In some of these, which go down very deep, there are natives digging, and we hear the hollow voices of djinns reverberating down underground. In one place a conduit breaks forth into a clear stream through a deep ravine, and here we dismount to water the animals. A flock of black goats are watering here too, and a half dozen nearly naked children squat about and wonder.

From time to time we pass groups of Moors in great peaked straw hats, one or two carelessly hanging ragged garments, bare brown arms and feet. They are driving troops of little asses overloaded with straw or pottery, or sun-baked bricks, or melons and quaint vegetables. They stare

curiously and raise their open right hands in sign of greeting. In one place, where a broken conduit breaks out and moistens the clayey soil, are slaves making bricks with slow African indolence, even as the Children of Israel made them for Pharoah millenniums ago. Here is a small field of scanty barley stubble wastefully reaped, and in the middle, a threshing floor, where a heap of grain is being winnowed by the wind blowing the chaff from each scattered shovelful. One remembers scriptural parables.

We begin to feel the sun. The barren Bled shimmers, parched, brown, and arid, broken by dry gullies cut by winter rains. Beside some rare well an olive clump or a single date palm varies the brown monotony. Ali Baba passes us with eight donkeys each loaded with two oil jars big enough to hold a robber. In the distance, the legs of a dozen camels in a caravan twinkle on the horizon. Rarely we pass a large or a small oasis, where a supply of wells supports rich green palmeries and olive groves. Once we go past a very large one surrounded by crumbling, low barriers of clay—a dead, deserted city inhabited only by hyenas. The rain-melted ruins suggest Sumer or Akkad, and the imagination dreams of the courts where Jamshid gloried and drank deep.

The sun is high now; the Bled becomes intensely hot; the glare is frightful. Poor Lulú the hound scratches the burning soil for a possible place to rest and pant a moment without scorching. The poor beastie is tired, for he goes zigzagging six miles to our one, stopping to roll in the dust, or to snap at a scorpion, or make ugly noises at a rough, black, desert cur that is sniffing at a sun-baked carcass. The faint, hot breeze dies out; and now and then revives in tiny spinning cyclones of dust, that whirl over the hot ground, filling our mouths and eyes. The heat becomes terrific, merciless; the air "Through which the sun walks burning without beams," makes shimmering distortions over the road ahead, like the halo of refraction around white-hot iron.

By half past eleven we reach the edge of the oasis of Tameslout. We hoped to spend the siesta time with the sheik of the village, a mile or so farther on, but the animals are exhausted, and we decide to camp for lunch here on the outskirts in the scraggy shade of an olive grove. Three men who have been threshing a vast mound of barley are resting, stretched out under a straw hut. One of them brings us water in a tall, round-bottomed amphora that suggests ancient Egypt. The porous jar has kept the water surprisingly and

gratefully cool. We lunch on cold chicken and Dutch cheese and drink a tin cup full of Si Lhas-sen's boiling tea which, strangely enough, is refreshing.

We tried to sleep for a few hours until the sun should get lower, but the heat made sleep impossible. There was nothing to do but endure life for five hours with what comfort might be derived from tobacco and stoicism. Out in the sun, which beat about us and invaded every possible opening in our sparse shade, the temperature was over 150 degrees. The breeze that spasmodically blew over the burning ground was like the hot breath of some terrible animal breathing close to one's face. It burnt our lips black and scorched our eyes, pained by constant squinting from the white glare. To add to our torture, we could vaguely see cool patches of white snow streaking the lofty peak of Djebel Mskrin forty miles away through the hazy air.

Our jar of water was soon empty; the men had gone away, and we did not know where to find more. One's throat felt thick and clotted; the whole body cried for water. I thought of the tale a gaunt, worn Frenchman told me a few days before in the café. He had spent nineteen years in Africa. On one trip he had been a hundred and

fifty days in the Sahara on a geographical expedition. Once the party went fifty days without finding water. In parts of the Sahara it is possible to find water at a depth of six feet, but in the region he was exploring they went for five days in one direction, returned, and started five days in another, and so on, for fifty days. Fifty days with no water but what they robbed from the neck vein of a camel! They set out with fifteen hundred camels and came back with one hundred and twenty-five, and lost three quarters of their men. It was a fearful tale of horror and heat and thirst and tenacity to life. And then he told of Timbuktu, the great mysterious black city three months journey across the desert, a ruined and wretched place, once a great centre of civilisation, but now swarming with a miserable population whose ears and lips are perforated with pieces of native gold.

There was nothing for us but to endure the heat, to look out over the shimmering Bled, and wait with oriental patience for the sun's rage to calm a little. Our Berbers, of course, did not suffer from the heat and did not mind waiting. Waiting quietly in the shade is their ideal of the perfect life. The old man slept for a while with the complete relaxation of an animal or a young child, and then sat up cross-legged and meditatively retired into him-



BRIDGE OVER THE OUED NFIS ON THE WAY TOWARD THE  
GREAT ATLAS.

The Oued Nfis winds for miles through a green flowery  
valley shut in by the desolate treeless hills of the lower  
Atlas slope.



self. The young Lhassen spent most of the time observing me as though I were some curious variety of beetle, and his expression seemed to say, "Isn't nature wonderful!" He was a most amusing oaf, good-natured and quite useless, with no interest in anything but food. He was very small, but had the largest feet ever known, so large, in fact, that he felt that something ought to be done about them. He once consulted a sorcerer, he told me later when we had become better acquainted, about having them reduced by some charm or apothecary's potion, but even the sorcerer could hold out no hope. He reminded me of the folk that old Sir John Mandeville says inhabit Ethiopia, and have one huge foot "so large that it schadowethe alle the body agen the sonne whanne thei wole lye and reste hem." I spent my time smoking and learning a few words in Lhassen's Shelluh dialect.

About half past four we set out again, trying to become interested in other things than the thirst that tormented us. We soon reached a threshing floor where half a dozen Moors were winnowing grain. A sheik squatting in the door of a tent, watching the work, filled for us an earthen bowl full of muddy water which we emptied many times. The bowl tasted of rancid cooking oil, but our wish

that Allah might reward the giver ("*Barak allah haufik!*") came from the heart.

We rode on after sunset, past many Berber strongholds, all built alike with square, mud walls flanked by four square towers, past threshing floors and stubble fields and wells that tap great water conduits from the mountains. The mountains begin to get nearer. We climb low rolling foothills, barren but at least a relief after the monotony of the Bled. Higher up we cross innumerable small tablelands cut with ravines and dry river beds, the sides of which are deeply scarred with erosions. Sometimes beside shrunken streams hidden in little protecting valleys, rose-laurels bloom in profusion, and the scent of honeysuckle blows across the twilit trail. Olives and clumps of prickly cacti still occasionally appear, but we have left behind the palms of the oases in the plain.

After riding on for an hour after the moon came up, we selected a place to camp for the night. We spread out blankets on a sandy beach beside the Oued Nfis, a shallow and rapid river that flows northward out of a long valley that splits the Great Atlas range. High above us, built on the very verge of the abrupt cliff, is a large Berber house where several families or rather, several households of one family, unite in a community. Si Lhassen

bargains with the men to get something for our supper. We exchange cigarettes for a dish of sour ewe's milk, a handful of black tea for some eggs, and pay three francs apiece for rather sinewy chickens. While supper is being prepared, Monsieur Lapandéry and I enjoy a moonlight bath in a pool of cold black water below a big rock, around which the stream splashes and gurgles, tangling the white moonbeams and whipping them into silver foam. How far off seems the terrific tropic heat of our noonday halt at Tameslout!

After supper I roll in a blanket, for the night falls cool. Two storks that have a big straggling nest up on the housetop resent our intruding presence with an amusing, laugh-like clatter of bills, and volplane down over our heads, making sinister black shadows of great wings across the moonlight. Kbira, who is sleepy and perhaps a little homesick, is snuggled up to her grandfather, who tells her a quaint folk-tale. His voice was very low and I could not make much out of his language, but the next day I got it down with the help of Kbira.

#### THE TALE OF THE STORK

The he- and she-stork in the early days were two human beings. Then they lived in great ease and possessed much goods. They owned flocks and

much wheat. One year came a great famine. Many suffered and died of hunger.

These two people had a maid servant brought up in their house. One day the man went out into the market place and called folk about him: "Come all ye who wish to buy grain. Come to my house and bring only half as much money as they ask you in the grain market. I live at such and such a place." When he had finished speaking he went back to his house; he called his maid servant; he said to her: "Go make ready much soap and pieces of glass. When these folk arrive let them all come up to where I am. Then shut the door of the house, and upon the stairs from the top step down, smear layers of soap and stick the pieces of glass on it. Do so from the top step even unto the very bottom." "It shall be done, my master," she replied. And the servant rose and took glass broken in small pieces, and much soap, and she tied up each in woolen rags. And behold the folk who would buy grain came to the door of the house. And when they knocked at the door, the maid servant opened. When they were all in, the servant showed them the way saying, "Go up," and one after another they went up. And the maid servant closed the outer door, and, taking the woolen rags full of glass and of soap, she went to the top step,

holding the soap in her left hand and the glass in her right. And when she came to the stop step of the stair she began to smear all the steps with the soap stuck full of glass, and upon the steps she applied this many times from the top to the bottom. When the thing was done she opened the outer door and fled away.

The man sold his grain and received the price agreed upon. He said to them: "Come now, get ye all down stairs and go!" He seized a stick and began to lay about him sorely, shouting, "Come, get ye down, get ye down!" Then the people started to go in a great hurry. When the foremost reached the top step and put his foot upon it, he slipped on the soap and rolled to the bottom. He had no time to pick himself up. Another fell tumbling on top of him. While the people were rolling and tumbling one over the other, the master of the house and his wife roared with laughter. Then God changed them into storks who make a clacking noise as if they were laughing.

That is the reason the man and his wife were changed to storks way back in those old times.

Just as we were falling asleep we saw what looked like half a dozen burning red fire-flies flitting slowly down the face of the cliff. They

were our Berber friends coming to visit us, each lighting his way by holding a stick with a glowing ember end. These little torches moved down the cliff path making bright circles and figure eights like spent Roman candles. Our friendly visitors brought us a present of thick barley pancakes and butter, and Si Lhassen made tea and gossiped pleasantly for an hour.

The first night in camp one does not sleep well. I woke up before the moon had set and lay watching the great, pale constellations wheel over the looming shadow of the house roof. The moon shone very white on the strangely still, sleeping forms beside me, and made fearful shadows under the bushy cacti along the river bed. Lulú the hound whimpered in his sleep. The river sang strange, unfamiliar, quiet things; bullfrogs croaked like deep-throbbing bass viols in a sad symphony. A dog up on the cliff barked sharply, and another one bayed his answer somewhere far off over the ghostly white hills. From time to time, a guttural Berber voice startled me from the shadow of the house above us.

*Seven*

FEUDAL LORDS AND SERFS

The sultan demands one measure,  
The caid asks for "two,"  
The sheik of the village says, "three";  
And so the troubles pile up.  
I have seen a thing so sad that I weep:  
Sad as the orphan without father or mother  
Is the serf who toils but gains nothing.

THE WORDS OF SIDI HAMMOU.

## *Seven*

### FEUDAL LORDS AND SERFS

THE morning of the second day we follow the wild green valley of the Oued Nfis, thickly bordered with rose-laurels in flower and luxuriant tropical clusters of Barbary fig cacti. We cross a picturesque old bridge and begin to climb into the low, barren hills. The morning sun is hot but not uncomfortable until we descend into broad valleys, dry and breathless, shut in by surrounding mountains. The only watering place for the thirsty animals is a buried stone reservoir half full of stale, warm water alive with wriggling things. In the wet season this is patiently filled from distant wells, which later dry up. We give each mule a meagre allowance of water dipped up in the wash basin. At the miserable village of Iggouder, where we rest for two scorching hours in the scraggy shade of a few olive trees, we are beset by a swarm of half a hundred children, almost all little girls. The nearly naked brats grin at us from all sides, half frightened but fascinated by

curiosity. Gaining confidence in numbers, they press in a close circle around us until, at a shout from old Si Lhassen, they scatter in fifty directions and completely clear the landscape. But in two minutes, dozens of little shaven heads and chocolate coloured faces peer around every cactus clump and olive bole, and soon they are fingering mule trappings and trying to dive into *chouari* bags.

In the afternoon we pass through scorching hot, new-reaped wheat fields in a rich region made fertile by irrigation. We are approaching the upland valley of Amizmiz. The water of a large stream, which flows from the snow-capped Atlas range, is diverted into innumerable canals and ditches, which wind through flourishing groves of olives and figs and periodically inundate small terraced patches of maize and melons.

Here and there are mysterious little white-domed marabouts, the shrines of venerated local saints. They shine dazzling white in the brilliant sunlight, and they seem to be surrounded with a feeling of religious aloofness and sacrosanctity. The great peaks of the Atlas loom near on two sides of us, barren but for stunted green oaks, and gouged and gullied with old erosions. And high and far beyond them all, Djebel Mskrin towers to fourteen

thousand feet, its white snowy summit gleaming coldly while we suffocate in the heat beside the equally aloof white marabouts' shrine.

In the late afternoon we meet Mahommed Laoussine, the calipha of Amizmiz, riding by in state on a beautiful white mule, and surrounded by half a dozen mounted retainers and three or four slaves running beside to keep abreast. The calipha greets us cordially and invites us to his kasba for the night. He and Monsieur Lapandéry are old friends. He sends back with us a tall black seneschal dressed in a striped *djellaba*. A beautiful silver-hilted poignard hangs from a crimson cord over his shoulder, and he wears one silver earring large as an anklet, a sign of slavery; its size indicates the importance of his position.

We ride on to the gate of the battered old, mud-built kasba, the feudal stronghold of the calipha. Mats are spread for us out of doors in the shade of a square tower, for sleeping in the open will be more comfortable than inside the kasba which the sun has baked all day. A quarter of a mile behind the castle is the town, a huddled group of square mud houses built beside the ruin of an older kasba, the castle of a former holder of the fief, whose power and lordship the present calipha seized by force many years ago.

The caliph holds exactly the position of the mediæval baron. He is under the suzerainty of a powerful over-lord, and, in turn, he has the power of life and death over his retainers. Amizmiz is a rich fief of the great Caïd Goundafi, one of the three great over-lords of the southern Atlas. These mighty dukes, the Glaoui, the Mtouffi, and the Goundafi, gained their power by force and guile during turbulent sultanates of the last century, and rule with an almost absolute sway, which acknowledges but nominally the control of the sultan. The last Glaoui, in fact, was for years the Warwick of Morocco, who made and unmade sultans, and declared for and really preserved the French protectorate in the south when in 1914 two-thirds of the troops had to be withdrawn. The ancestral castles of these over-lords are in the heart of the Atlas, but they depute their power to some resident relative, while they themselves live in great palaces in Marrakesh and spend their time in diplomacy and higher politics. They hold many great fiefs in the cultivated mountain valleys and rich fertile plains to the south and west, and exact large tribute and military support from scores of under-caïds and caliphas. The caliphas, or barons, in turn demand heavy imposts from the sheiks, or heads of villages, who grievously grind the faces of the poor tribes-

men on whom the whole feudal burden rests. The caïds or caliphas seize the best of everything. The tribesman who cultivates the soil or raises flocks is merely a serf who receives but one-fifth of what his labour produces; the sheik, the calipha, the great caïd and the sultan get the rest. The whole political and economic system of Morocco is very like that of the greater part of Europe in the twelfth century. And the parallel is carried out further in the relation of the calipha-barons among themselves, for they are at constant war with one another. The normal life of southern Morocco has been a sequence of feuds, with destruction and pillage, burning of villages and sacking of kasbas. The fighting is done by the body of personal retainers, who in the moments of peace live indolently in their lord's stronghold, their only duty being to kiss his shoulder in fealty, whenever he crosses his own outer courtyard.\*

At Amizmiz time turns back hundreds of years and one can see mediæval life as it is still lived,

\* The French, who are wise and tactful colonizers, have not interfered with this feudal system. They have taken control of the mineral resources, established titles to lands, stimulated the native arts and industries, and in the occupied regions have forcibly maintained peace. They have somewhat curbed the greed of the caïds, and where their power extends, have tried to make justice depend upon justness rather than upon bribery, but they have wisely avoided interfering with the religious and social life, and old established institutions they have left untouched.

and lose all sense of the reality of modern Europe, which is but little more than a week's journey away. As we sit here on mats of woven rushes spread on the stone roof of a huge cistern, and look through the archway of the kasba gate, which frames a picturesque group of idle Moors in graceful garments, Paris must be some place we dreamed of once and America cannot have been discovered. The sun has dropped behind the near mountain peaks and the grain fields and watered gardens glow in soft golden light. A group of serfs, at a signal from their taskmaster, leave off with a faint shout their lazy winnowing of the caliph's wheat and stroll toward the little mud huts. A prisoner in a single rag caught up over one shoulder and a horrible leg fetter, two ankle rings connected by a straight iron bar, waddles like a duck, as he makes many painfully hobbled journeys to fill his big earthen water jar at the cistern over which we are sitting.

A comic little negro slave, clad mostly in slippers like an Aubrey Beardsley drawing, pours water over my hands and grins at the contrast of their dark bronze with the absurd whiteness of my bare forearms. I solemnly quote at him,

Mislike me not for my complexion,  
The shadow'd livery of the burnished sun,



OLD SI LHASSEN, THE BERBER GUIDE ON THE ATLAS TRAIL.

The withered old patriarch rode on day after day, scarcely ever speaking a word except to say his five daily prayers or to mutter some occult incantation.



but the very sound of Shakespeare awes him and he keeps a frightened eye on me as he brings the basin and kettle to Monsieur Lapandéry. The tall black seneschal serves us little glasses of smoking coffee, and then a hot *kouskous* made of boiled cucumbers, egg-plant, peppers, carrots, and marrow, walled in with steamed white millet. The little slave stands beside us, brushing the flies away with a palm branch. Somewhere over the wall a donkey hee-haws. And from the little slits of windows in the tower over our heads floats the high rippling laughter of the women of the caliph's household; they are telling one another questionable stories!

And then the caliph arrives; fat, pleasant, sixty, with the self-confidence of a great personage. He drops his slippers, sits down on the mat with us and fondles his bare pink heels. The charming little Kbira sits between him and Monsieur Lapan-déry and interprets the conversation, for the caliph talks the Shelluh Berber dialect and talks it very fast and deep in his beard. Kbira, who was born a diplomat, cuddles up to the old man and exercises the winning fascination of her eight-year-old charm. The conversation turns on the price of sheep in Marrakesh and the probable state of the almond crop in the Souss, and the high cost of living. Amizmiz is the limit of the French pro-

tected zone, and as the dangerous part of our journey begins here, the calipha offers us an armed escort. We decline the offer, because soldiers have expensive appetites and large ideas of expected generosity. The calipha says we shall be safe from the tribesmen, for the great Goundafi has ordered them not to get into any trouble with foreigners, for that will mean the sending of machine guns. Our only danger is from lawless bandits, and he warns us specially against the wild Aït Semmeg, through whose country we must pass. And there is also a chance of our being sent back when we get to the kasba of the Goundafi, in the valley at Talat N' Yaccoub, for the calipha in charge does not like to have foreigners wandering around his domain.

Our conversation was interrupted from time to time by servants and functionaries who came to receive orders or beg requests, for the calipha is on familiar terms with his vassals and acts as a patriarchal chief, adviser, judge, leader, and ruler. Two soldiers bring in a handsome young fellow accused of stealing two French francs. He is ragged and unkempt, for he has lain all day in jail—a dark pit with a big stone over it—but has the attractive frank features and intelligent eyes that mark the best of the Berber peasants. The soldiers present the evidence against him and several witnesses are

heard. Then the accused advances to the mat, drops off his slippers, kneels, and kisses the calipha's fat hand, and, standing up, makes a vehement and dramatic protestation of his innocence. Then the soldiers and the accused and the witnesses all give accusation and evidence and denial at the same time, with much hubbub and gesticulation. The calipha quietly listens to the wild gabble of voices, thoughtfully scratching his nose and tugging at his beard. At a sign from him, the crowd becomes silent and, standing barefoot, facing Mecca with uplifted hands, they pray to the Most Merciful. The calipha then solemnly adjudges the fellow guilty and orders him to be given one stroke of the bastinado. The prisoner is led aside and thrown to the ground, his bare feet in the air; and the executioner, a big muscular chap, having but one blow to deliver, makes it a mighty one. The culprit lies on the ground a long time before he can get up and go away.

In the evening, after a dinner of deliciously roasted chickens followed by the usual *kouskous*, as we sit drinking mint-flavoured tea and chatting with the servants grouped around the yellow glow of the lantern, we hear over in the village a wild confusion of tom-toms, lutes, and viols beating fast, joyous rhythms. And this is intermingled with

strange shrill *you-you's*, the cries of joy with which the women greet a conqueror or an honoured guest. And in the midst of this a sudden gunshot cracks. There is a wedding in the village and the shot is the bridegroom's announcement of his arrival outside the house of the bride. The music and the cries cease, while the newly married are left alone together, and the guests devote their attention to the feast which is served out of doors. Laughter and loud merry talk float over to us as we lie back on our blankets smoking and looking up at the warm stars. In a little while, when the distant merry-making has become a vague humming in my drowsy ears, a second loud gunshot wakes me. This is the bridegroom's signal that the marriage is consummated. The *you-you's* recommence, and in the midst of the shouting and crying, women's voices sing a marriage song. I cannot hear the words, but old Si Lhassen knows them and with little Kbira's help I get them down:

Gracefully she comes down from the mountains,  
Robed all in white,  
And all lovely with her golden hair—  
Her hair which falls in long beautiful tresses.  
And her brow is fair as the crescent moon  
In the month of Shaaban.  
Ee a la la—Ee a la li.

Her eyebrows are delicately traced as with a pencil,  
Her eyes are the eyes of a young gazelle.

## FEUDAL LORDS AND SERFS 161

Her little nose is fair as a rosy medlar,  
And her cheeks are full like rounded apples.  
Ee a la la—Ee a la li.

One would think her teeth a string of pearls;  
Her mouth is like King Solomon's ring;  
Her wet lips are sweet as sugar much refined.  
Ee a la la—Ee a la li.

O coral lips! O neck that gleams like a silver vase!  
O bosom white and firm  
As the pure marble of a Sultan's bath!  
A swelling bosom round as two ripe pomegranates!  
O! lovely maid, a green pasture for thy husband,  
And for the ears of those who hear me!  
Ee a la la—Ee a la li.

The noise of the laughter and shouting and the beating of the tom-toms kept up far into the night. I woke again some time long before morning, when every star of the Great Bear was completely hidden below the northerly horizon and Arcturus and his Sons had long gone to rest, but a single tom-tom was still beating its haunting, empty monotony, the expression of the strange old mournful heart of Africa with its undertone of sadness even in moments of joy. The rest of the party were asleep, breathing quietly beside me, and in the corner of the wall shadowed from the star-shine, loomed the figure of the Ethiopian slave, uncannily tall and motionless, keeping watch over us through the night.

The next morning very early, before the sun had driven us out of our blankets, the caliphā paid us a visit. We jumped into our clothes to receive our dignified host, who was on his way to begin the daily round of overseeing his feudal domain. He ceremoniously wished us a good journey and commended us to Allah. And then we drank a cup of Si Lhassen's coffee, delicious, aromatic, and inspiring; and eager for any event, we set out on the trail through the mountains.

The first day we passed no villages and met but few natives on the road. We went over two high ranges with gorgeous mountain scenery, along difficult steep passages and fascinating changes in vegetation. The first adventure in the dangerous, forbidden zone was the cordial, hospitable reception of a mountaineer. He had fought through the war in a Moroccan regiment, and his *Croix de Guerre* was still pinned to his tattered blue tunic. He followed us two miles trying to persuade us to be his guests in his mountain hut long enough to eat a *kouskous*, which the women would shortly prepare. We were pressed for time, but compromised by halting for a half hour's rest and tea.

The hut was a very crude affair built of mud and roughly shaped wooden beams, the roof of baked mud, plastered thickly on sticks and poles. The

animal-like simplicity of the structure suggested a robin's nest or a beaver-dam. In the little court, around which three shed-like rooms were arranged, were a small hand-mill for grinding corn, an oven, a clay stove, a copper tea kettle, and two or three terra cotta dishes for preparing *kouskous* and gruel. Two black goats were tethered in a little sty in one corner. Our host lived in this home with his father, mother, brother, and sister-in-law, and half a dozen children, all grown girls.

Two of the girls were very pretty, with liquid brown eyes and a shy half-frightened manner. In Berber poems women are always called gazelles. I persuaded these two gazelles to leave the primitive loom at which they were weaving a white woolen blanket, and approach near enough to eat lumps of sugar from my hand. Their father smiled at their shyness and made several rather broad remarks, which, instead of embarrassing the lovely animals, amused them extremely.

It is only among these simple mountaineers that a stranger is allowed to talk to Berber women. It is true that they are not kept in the strict seclusion of Arab women, but there is none of the familiar mingling of the sexes in work and play that is usual among European peasants. Berber women have much to say in the conduct of the family, and no

man may marry without his mother's consent, but, as among all Moslems, a wife is the husband's property, very jealously guarded. A stranger among the Berbers must be very circumspect in his admiration, for their long curved poignards are very sharp. Berber women are not veiled, except those in Marrakesh who have imitated the Arab custom, but in the presence of a stranger they hold one hand vaguely over the lower part of their faces. I have noticed, however, that the old and unattractive ones make a more strict show of Moslem modesty than the young charmers. In the present instance the two girls shyly looked at me through two fingers when they approached closely, but they were quite content to be fully admired from across the courtyard.

This little family group was extremely poor. The greater part of the produce from their pitiful, struggling patches of Indian corn and vegetables must be handed over to the sheik of the nearest village. They had but a handful of tea and a little sugar, but the cordiality and gracious courtesy of our host was the most complete in the world. Hospitality among these simple folk is the first of the cardinal virtues. To illustrate this point, our host, while we were sipping his sweet mint-flavoured tea,

told us a story of the Brigand and the Guest of God:

There was once a man who was a brigand and he went to a place in the desert and lived alone. He had killed a hundred men less one. One day, came a man passing by this road. Sunset overtook him. He said to himself, "Where shall I pass the night?" He saw the house of the brigand beside the road. He said, "I will go pass the night here." He went, arrived at the house, and the wife of the brigand came out.

"The guest of God!" \* he said.

But the woman replied: "Friend, what shall I do with thee? My husband slays men."

He replied: "Yes, I shall pass the night here until morning."

The woman said: "If thou wilt, I will put thee in the silo so that my husband cannot see thee when he comes."

"Very well," said he. She led him to the place, let him down, and left him there. The husband returned.

The woman said: "Husband, there is a man in this place."

"What is he doing here?"

\* *Anebgi n Rabbi*, the formula for claiming hospitality.

"He claimed the hospitality of God. I said 'I will put thee in the silo.' He said: 'Very well.' "

The man said: "Go bring him out." The woman went and pulled up the stranger.

"Come, talk to him." The stranger went with her into the room where the master of the house was sitting. The stranger greeted him and the master of the house said:

"Welcome! Whence comest thou?"

"I come from my own abode."

"Whither goest?"

"I go to the house of God."

The master of the house said: "Friend, a strange thing has happened."

"What has happened?"

"I am a brigand. A hundred men less one have I slain. When thou shalt come to the house of God, question Him and say: 'I have a friend who has slain a hundred men less one.' What will He say to thee? Shall I go to paradise or to punishment?"

The stranger went until he came to the house of God. He said: "Lord God, I wish to ask you about a friend of mine who hath slain a hundred men less one."

The Lord God replied: "Why hath he not slain thee when thou didst pass the night there?"

"Lord, he did not slay me."

"What didst thou say?"

"Lord, I said: 'The guest of God.' "

"What did he give you for supper?"

"Lord, he was very good to me."

Then said the Lord God: "Go tell him I have added a hundred years to his life. His abode shall be in paradise because he hath given hospitality to a guest of God."

The next day our journey through rough passes and deep ravines and over high ranges was broken by another glimpse of mountain life. We stopped to rest at the *agadir* of the Sheik of Tadirt N' Bourd, a quaint old mud stronghold, strategically placed in a narrow part of the gorges of the Oued Nfis. The *agadir* looks like several smooth-sided, cubical mud blocks piled rudely and irregularly against a steep barren hillside. In front, far below the pass, the Oued Nfis roars along its pebbly bottom. On the big rough-hewn beam of the square, low doorway are cut a dozen mystic symbols, square and angular characters potent against the power of djinns. After a few minutes' waiting we are led in to the sheik. The interior of the *agadir* is very rough and primitive; no evidence of even simple art or of luxury. The sheik lives in

much the same manner as our poor mountain host of yesterday, except that he has a much larger house, and plenty of food, and does not have to toil for these advantages. The rather fat and infirm old man, sitting on a mat of rushes, receives us with a faint smile of welcome and a courteous hand. We sit beside him on the mat and a half dozen of his retainers come up to greet us. A dish of rich wild honey and melted butter is brought in; we all sit around and sop up sweet sticky mouthfuls with pieces of thick pancakes.

Little Kbira, as before, sits beside the old sheik stroking his white beard, and asking questions in a low, childish whisper. We undoubtedly owe our safety on the trip to the charm of Kbira, as well as to the tact of Monsieur Lapandéry, who understands the ways of these native chieftains. The sheik assures us that we may pass freely through his territory, for his brave retainers have quite put down all bands of wandering brigands, and that thanks to him the valley of the Oued Nfis is as safe as the sanctuary of a mosque. He did not tell us, however, that his own noble followers themselves turned brigands whenever the probable booty seemed worth the risk of incurring the displeasure of the caïd. Nor did we think it tactful to ask him whether the two European rings on his

fat little finger had not been slipped from the hands of dead French soldiers.

A keen eyed, supple-limbed, young Berber comes over and sits beside me, and with courteous gestures that help along my as yet hazy notion of the Shelluh dialect, makes me understand that he wishes to have an American for his friend. There is nothing of his that he will not gladly share with me. Then he admires my amber sun glasses and tries them on with great delight; he would like to see the world as I do! Kbira here comes to my rescue and suggests that when he visits us at Marrakesh we shall find him a pair.

We ride on all day through valleys and over water courses and in the midst of lurid volcanic scenery. The villagers we pass are never unfriendly, but they are not hospitable, and will neither give nor sell us any food. For ourselves, we can get on with our store of ham and sardines, but the essential thing is to find oats and straw for the animals. One does not feel safe riding along the verge of an abrupt cañon on the back of a mule that has not eaten in twelve hours. The reason for the attitude of the natives is not a hostile feeling toward us as foreigners, but their own necessity for conservation of resources. We are now on one of the two great caravan trails between Marrakesh

and the Souss; for hundreds of years commerce in oil, almonds, and grain has been carried on by trains of mules and asses that pass daily through these narrow and precarious defiles. By bitter experience the valley villagers have learned that hospitality may go beyond the point of being a virtue, and that a winter food supply is better than a few silver *douros*. The caïd exacts his four-fifths and the remainder is barely enough to keep the wretched peasant alive.

We sometimes send old Si Lhassen on alone to a village, for his patriarchal aspect and the reputed knowledge of secret things and occult necromancies that always attaches to the very old, can often procure food when the offer of money alone can not. One day I saw him practising his white magic. We were halting for a hungry noonday rest in a breathless valley beside a shrunken stream. The only shade was a clump of rose-laurels covered with pink blooms like flowering oleanders. The bushes were too thick to creep into, and as the sun was directly overhead we hugged the few inches of shadow around the edges. A poor tribesman came over from a group of huts steeply terraced on a bare hill-slope. He and Si Lhassen conferred long together, the old grandfather assuming his most saintly air. Presently the man went away, and

shortly returned with two women bringing a naked idiot child of about five years, whom they placed before Si Lhassen. They then counted out nine hen's eggs, which the old man boiled in a pan over a little fire, and while they were cooking he selected a handful of little clear, coloured pebbles. When the eggs had cooked, he took them out and put them aside as the sorcerer's prerequisite, and, taking the pan of water from the fire, poured into it a handful of pinkish salt. The idiot child stared and blinked and feebly moved his little arms. The perfect childlike calm of Si Lhassen's wrinkled old face lapsed into a blank beatitude; he seemed to shrink into his reverend self with an aloof otherworldliness. He slowly dissolved the salt, stirring with one finger, and counted the pebbles-like beads in a rosary, muttering inaudible prayers. When he had told over all the little pebbles, he wetted the face of the idiot child who whimpered witlessly. The ceremony over, the Berbers took the child away. The rite may well be the remnant of Christian baptism, preserved as a superstition for twelve hundred years, from the ante-Islamic time when Christianity flourished in Mauretania Tingitane, preserved like the sign of the Cross woven in rugs and cut in the beams of doorways. The use of salt in the water is a pagan touch, for the seven kinds

of malignant djinns that pester the world abhor salt.

A sequel must be added to this incident. When we came to eat the eggs we found them all bad! Si Lhassen was piqued and muttered that no good would come to men who sought God's blessing by deception.

At the end of the fourth day out from Marrakesh we enjoyed the pleasant surprise of meeting two Frenchmen prospecting along the trail. They led us down a difficult, twisting descent to the valley of the Oued, a thousand feet below, to their comfortable little camp where we spent the night, both of our parties sharing our scanty supplies. They assured us the villages would sell them nothing had nothing, in fact, to sell, but Si Lhassen came from the village by nine o'clock with a chicken which no human teeth could penetrate. It suffered us, however, to enjoy the communal pleasure of hungry people loudly inhaling hot soup.

The Frenchmen advise us to turn back. They tell us that we shall be stopped at the next valley, where the Kasba of the Goundafi is situated. They have tried for six months to pass over the next great range to get down to the Souss. They say that the caliph will come out with fifty followers and bar our way, as soon as news comes to him that

we are in the valley. We can shoot two or three, but what then? Better not risk the meeting. But Monsieur Lapandéry and I are for trying to get through.

The next morning we set out for the Talat N' Yaccoub, riding our hungry animals. Si Lhassen succeeds in finding a little straw for them on the way, and we make an early halt for luncheon. We decide to ride on through the heat of the day so that we shall encounter fewer people on the trail. The Talat N' Yaccoub is a vast valley in the very heart of the Atlas, surrounded on four sides by giant peaks with sharp, precipitate slopes. We enter it from the north by the deep-cut valley of the Oued Nfis, along which we have been travelling. The entrance is at the confluence of the Oued Nfis with the Oued Agoundis, two mountain streams which the melting winter snows swell to great rivers for a few months of every year. In summer they are shallow brooks fordable almost anywhere. Out of the great valley are two difficult passes both leading into the Souss, one over the Tizi N' Test which reaches a height of sixty-one hundred feet, the other over Tizi Ouicheddán, almost nine thousand feet. The valley is therefore the key to the Atlas. The possession of it has made the caïds of Goundafi for centuries the lords of the mountains,

and they have lived on the tolls demanded from richly laden caravans. The clan of the Goundafi are descended from the mighty tribe of the Massouda who, during the twelfth century, led by the mystic reformer Ibn Toumert, swept in wild hordes up from these valleys and founded the great dynasty of the Almohades, conquerors of all Barbary and lords of Spain. It was here that the power of the latest pretender, El Hibba, dissolved when in his flight from Marrakesh a few years ago, he arrived with five thousand asses and camels. The Goundafi allowed him to pass, but on condition that he hand over the whole great train!

As the trail over the Tizi N' Test leads directly by the Kasba of Goundafi, we took the other, more difficult, way over Tizi Ouicheddah. And strangely enough, we got through in spite of the Frenchmen's prophecies. As we passed two or three wretched mud villages, partly melted into ruins, groups of natives stared curiously at us but did not offer to stop us. We did not carry our arms openly for fear of seeming suspicious, but Kbira sat on the two automatics in the *chouari* bag, and we rode close to her mule, ready to close up if necessary. We learned afterward that the reason for our not being molested was that the caliph of the caïd Goundafi had gone off into the

mountains with his retainers on a hunting expedition, and there was no one left to arrest us but the peasants, who are too timid to interfere with Europeans.

We toiled all the afternoon over the savage and rugged pass and descended again to inhabited valleys on the other side. Toward nightfall we ran into an adventure which came near bringing the expedition to a sudden and fatal end. By some such mistake as we made, through an imperfect knowledge of native customs, many a European has left his bones to lie in waste places, whitening in the winter rains and African sunlight. We had sent Si Lhassen on ahead to try his luck or his sorcery at getting a little oats or straw for the mules, and so we did not for the moment have the advantage of his knowledge and advice. At a turn in the trail we spied a little knoll not far off, with what seemed the ruin of a little roofless stone hut on top, and beside it a large pile of new straw shining yellow in the sunlight. On the principle that necessity need not be overscrupulous, we decided to halt here long enough for the animals to "borrow" a meal, and then go on and see what luck Si Lhassen may have had.

We lifted the *chouari* bags off the mules, unbridled Kino and Aziza, and left them to the enjoy-

ment of their stolen meal. I settled down to the complete satisfaction of a restful pipe, and Monsieur Lapandéry, with the awkward tenderness of a man, began combing little Kbira's curly hair. We were too keenly elated over our success in slipping by the Goundafi to think much about the fact that we had reached the country of the Ait Semmeg, the bandit tribe against whom the caliph of Amizmiz had warned us. Monsieur Lapandéry was making scornful remarks about the action of the French authorities with their fear of native hostility, and he felt that the two French prospectors had reasons of their own for trying to keep us out of the country. And just at this moment, a very ugly head with a savage scar over the jaw popped up in front of us. In a minute two more heads appeared and shortly the knoll was completely surrounded by eight Berbers armed with rifles and long, brass-sheathed poignards. They closed about us in an angry circle, all hoarsely shouting at once and gesticulating with clenched fists. One small, active chap thrust his face up to mine and sullenly glowered, and as he turned away to kick the mules from the straw, he vehemently spat on the ground, the fanatic Moslem's gesture of contempt at contact with a Christian dog. The natives were so excited and rapid in their talk that

it was impossible to catch what they were saying. Little Kbira was frightened and clung close to Monsieur Lapandéry, who tried to calm her so that she could tell what the trouble was about. The confused excitement did not seem to indicate an attack of brigands, who might be expected to proceed at once to the securing of our persons while they robbed our baggage. But evidently we were in a predicament.

Before anything more than a frenzy of talk had occurred, a fine looking young Berber, who proved to be the son of a sheik, strode quickly up the hill, pushed the men aside, and calmly took command of the situation. "Why," he exclaimed with a fierce directness, while Kbira timidly translated, "do you Europeans come into our country, make a law for yourselves and violate this shrine of a holy saint? No one but a Christian would turn pack animals loose in a sacred place and give them straw that is under the protection of a marabout." The little ruined hut was a marabout's tomb, and the villagers, lacking any granary to store their surplus straw, piled it here where it would be safe under the protection of the venerated shrine. We had committed the unpardonable sin of sacrilege.

Monsieur Lapandéry's tact came to our rescue. He explained, mostly with Kbira's help, that our

fault was through ignorance. The marabouts' shrines in the Bled we could tell, but here we were in a strange country and did not know them. We were at heart, though Christians, religious men with deep respect for sacred places. We should not knowingly have done this thing and would make reparation. The dignified boy accepted our explanation and the men reluctantly acquiesced, though with longing looks at our fat *chouari* bags. They accepted a few silver *douros* by way of tangible apology. The sheik's son shook hands with us graciously and they helped us load the mules and go on our way.

And that night as we were camping by a well outside a village, and, sleepy and fatigued, were trying to get our teeth into another of Si Lhassen's chickens, a man arrived and presented me with a small jar of wild honey as a present from the sheik's son.

*Eight*

ATLAS SCENERY

The heaven says to the earth: "I am greater than thou,  
For the many coloured stars all have their being in me."

The earth says to the heaven: "The mercy of God is greater  
than all;

The flowers of a thousand hues are all born from my bosom."

The heaven says to the earth: "I am greater than thou,  
For if I did not shed my dew upon thee, how should thy  
flowers find their glorious colours?"

The earth says to the heaven: "The mercy of God is greater  
than all;

Thou drawest the dew from the sea, and the springs of the  
sea are mine;

If I hold fast these springs within me, whence canst thou  
draw thy dews?"

The heaven says to the earth: "I am greater than thou,  
For I send down the rays of a burning sun; I smite thy  
flowers and they wither away."

The earth says to the heaven: "The mercy of God is greater  
than all.

From the hidden depths I draw forth water to make my  
flowers blossom forth again."

NERSES THE ARCHIMANDRITE.

## *Eight*

### ATLAS SCENERY

DAY after day of changing light and moods, of painful fatigues and wonderful refreshing moments of rest, of fascinating glimpses of remote lives, and baffling, fleeting glances into wondering faces that greet us along our way, we journey on toward the blank white places at the bottom of the map labelled Souss. Day after day the marvellous scenery changes, and each day panorama seems more splendid than the last. We spend a morning climbing through rocky gorges, difficult and steep, where the mule's hoofs clatter up a giant stairway of chunky cubes of grey basalt, irregular, sharp, and slippery. Here the vegetation is thin and dwarfed like the quaint green things grotesquely old that grow in miniature Chinese rock gardens. Soft, green, twisting junipers and clumps of little firs, for all the world the same as those my father lovingly plants in his lawn and waters with his tears, grow easily here where the thin earth is baked in the crevices and seems never to

have known moisture, and the wind blows dry. And the strangely incongruous cabbage palms, dwarfed and shrivelled, grow in between the evergreens like weeds. Big argan trees, gnarled and spiny, loaded with green olive-like nuts, a harshly exotic tree which grows nowhere else in the world, cast a scrubby shade here and there over the rocky trail; and Aziza, my lady mule, when seized with a temperamental mood, dives straight into the stiff, prickly, lower branches. And though I clutch her velvet neck and madly kick her flanks, my sun helmet is hopelessly entangled in the spines and I am left in the plight of the young man Absalom, while Kbira shouts with glee.

Then we reach some nameless barren height, and look back over the rugged tortuous way by which we have climbed, and the distance seems a poor accomplishment after so much effort. Five hours of winding and climbing and toiling have gained us scarce six straight miles toward our goal. These vast mountains piled in wild confusion and heaped like the wreckage of a shattered planet, mountains battered and barren, flooded with white tropic sunshine, grey, craggy steeps dotted with flecks of green, and distant blue ranges holding up the sky, drown all thought and subdue the mind to a real humility, a sense of one's own pitiful insignificance



#### IRRIGATED VALLEY IN THE ATLAS.

In the midst of inhospitable barren mountains the natives have constructed systems of irrigation that make possible flourishing gardens of olives, almonds, maize and vegetables.



beside this awful vastitude. And just at this wonderful moment old Si Lhassen, who has ridden silently on, all the morning, goes to the edge of a great flat rock which reaches out over an abyss; he thrusts himself into the gorgeous panorama, and, shuffling off his worn old slippers, and lifting his shrivelled old hands, he faces the horizon beyond which Mecca lies, and says the prayer that begins, "God is most great! God is most great! There is no god but God!"

We begin the descent into the next valley. The narrow rocky way winds along the verge of precipices almost sheer, where a falling stone will roll and leap and rebound and echo up from a cavernous dry stream bed far below. The sure-footed Aziza takes her own pace, twists her supple little body this way and that, as she picks the safest footing, now dodging a big boulder in the path, now bunching her fore feet for a leap or a drop, and now sliding half on her haunches down a loose pebbly slope, as the trail zigzags and climbs and descends and redoubles. Miles off ahead, where it makes a long turn to the left, we see the white cut across the side of some great grey mountain, and perhaps a flock of sheep, miniature in perspective, or a train of laden pack asses crawling with a painful pace.

Often in the narrow pass along the cliff's edge we meet these caravans of mules or asses. Then follows such a shouting and scrambling and crowding for room to get by, for there are few places on these trails where two animals with bulging side panniers can squeeze comfortably past. Or on a sudden turn we run abruptly into the bulk of a solitary camel, who makes the hideous noises of his kind, as his driver pounds his stubborn head up against the rock to make him give us a few inches of space between himself and a sheer descent of four hundred feet.

For a large part of the way from Amizmiz, at the foot of the Atlas, to the great valley of Talat N' Yaccoub, the Goundafi stronghold in the heart of the mountains, we followed up the course of the Oued Nfis. This flows out from the valley through a great cut in the surrounding wall of mountains, and winds on through a vast steep-sided cañon which it has cut through past æons of time. The Oued Nfis, in the spring, is a great turbulent flood of melted snows, that tears out new courses for itself, as it rushes along the rocky bottom of its wide valley, and gouges fresh scars in the face of the cañon wall with the loose stones it drags along in its impetuous, steep descent. In July and August, the Oued is a noisy shallow stream, easily

fordable almost anywhere, except when swollen by a sudden rain, and so roiled with red clay that the mules are afraid to attempt it. Once on the return trip, when we forded one of its nameless tributary streams, just as we reached the opposite bank, a two-foot wave of roaring, red-brown water, the result of some distant cloudburst far away in the mountains, came tearing down the stream bed. Had we reached the spot three minutes later we should have had to camp for hours, waiting for the water to drop again to a fordable depth.

The trail to the Souss follows the Oued Nfis, sometimes along the top of the cliff, sometimes hanging midway on a precarious footing of flat stones built up on roots and sticks thrust into fissures, or on some natural ledge just wide enough for a single mule, and sometimes the trail goes far inland over a lofty peak, and we lose the river for hours. And then we go through narrow defiles, worn ten feet into the soft rock by the hoofs of centuries of mule caravans; and down narrow brooks, under arched bowers of perfumed honeysuckle and festoons of white-blooming clematis, cloyingly sweet, mingled with blackberry brambles in chevaux de-frises, that wickedly gouge and tear us. We emerge again at the brink of the cliff, where the cañon makes an elbow through scarred, red-brown

shale, or through grey rock seamed with broad bands of milk-white chalk. We look down sheer to the river bed which almost encircles some toy mud village, with bright green irrigated cornfields and Noah's ark cattle drinking knee deep in a green pool. Then the trail zigzags a cramped descent to the dry pebbly valley bottom, and crosses and re-crosses the river eight times of an afternoon. The banks are vividly green for miles, with waxy rose-laurels dotted with a profusion of delicate pink, poison blossoms, and everywhere are clumps of prickly cacti ten feet high, covered with mellow, over-ripe Barbary figs, tropical, sickly and unwholesome-looking. Sometimes as we pass through this breezeless valley, light showery clouds make the day comfortable, but again, for hours the sun sizzles from a clear hot sky with an intensity that is torrid and African.

Once for several hours, as we skirted the river along an easy trail, in the early morning before the sun had found the bottom of the valley, we rode with two Shelluh boys, who jogged along on little pack asses loaded with chunks of gypsum to make plaster to whiten the courtyard of some caïd's harem. They sat perched on the bulky *chouari* bags, and kept up a rhythmical drumming with

their bare heels on the asses' necks, for this tapping rhythm makes the little animals keep up their pace. And across the Oued, three girls with loads of faggots on their backs were following a mountain path to their village. One of the boys begins a yodel, high pitched and strangely beautiful, in minor cadences that fall and catch themselves and fall again, like thin streams breaking down the face of a cliff. And when the yodel stops, the craggy mountain looming over us echoes back the last phrase, and faintly and far away another echo comes, and then one more that fades and dies like the amber light of dawn in the valley. The tune is so elusive that I can never quite remember it, but it haunts me like the memory of things that might have been and dreams that have not come true.

Then a girl from across the river calls back an answering melody, clear and delicate, full of wild sweetness and the frank longing of natural hearts. And the other boy, after a brief pause, in which he makes up another short stanza, sings it to the same yodel tune; and another girl in turn wafts back her little song, that echoes over the water and dies away. And here are the words of some of the *islans* they are exchanging to while away the lovely morning:

A boy sings,

Love has stolen away my heart and destroyed it;  
It is as though my bones were brayed in a mortar with a  
heavy pestle.

And a girl sings,

Love is like a young she-goat;  
When you wish to conceal her then she bleats loudest.

A boy sings,

When the water shall run backward up the mountain slopes,  
When the jackal shall keep the shepherd's flock,  
Then only shall I forget my best-beloved.

And a girl replies,

My love is like a bunch of grapes;  
I would fain eat him all to quench the fire which burns my  
heart.

And sometimes they become ironic,

The love of to-day, with what shall I compare it?  
It is like taking a stroll upon a house-top;  
Whoever walks there may take seven paces,  
But at the eighth there is no place for his foot.

To this a girl replies,

The love of to-day, with what shall I compare it?  
It is like a piece of bread in water,  
As soon as you try to grasp it in your hand,  
It dissolves in little bits.

And so they go on framing little poems to the  
lovely echoing call, for more than half an hour,  
while we are riding along beside them, and long



#### NATIVE SALT MINE IN THE ATLAS.

Salt water pumped up from wells is evaporated in shallow pools. The whole valley sparkles with white crystals as though covered with snow, and all round are volcanic cones of red-purple tuff.



after we have passed on up the valley we still hear the haunting, fading cadences that die into the distant murmur of a singing stream.

Such fascinating moments as this were the charm of the journey, and these are the moments that linger in memory, these fleeting human contacts. For background there was always the glory of the mountain peaks, or the quiet loveliness of hidden valleys, and the romance of wild gorges and rushing water courses. For unearthly romance there were the volcanic regions, wildly wonderful, incredibly strange.

One morning we toiled up the side of a great rugged mountain through a confusion of shapeless, jagged rocks banded with volcanic sulphurous streaks of pale yellow, and burnt-out, honeycombed slag, and here and there grotesque, animal-like lumps of stone, painfully distorted and squeezed by awful, unimaginable forces in some old past period of time. We reach the summit and descend the opposite slope into a landscape lurid with red and deep purple rocks dotted with bright specks of sparse evergreen shrubs. The winding pass zigzags down a vast red cone of soft volcanic tuff, where the track from above looks like the trace of a terrific serpent of another age. We skirt the

edge of dry ravines, where spring freshets have made deep gullies in the soft earth and left, here and there, strange stalagmites crowned with precariously balanced boulders.

The scene is on a gigantic scale, uncanny as some landscape in the moon. The day is cloudy; rain and mist shroud the huge peaks that seem to loom near and towering. Through rifts in the clouds golden ladders of sunlight stream on the half-shadowed hills, and play with an amber, elfin sheen on the streaked and particoloured sides of ancient cones and landslides of purple tuff.

For one whole day on the journey back, we were led by a short-cut trail through an uncharted wilderness, so holy and enchanted that most natives fear to go that way, a region fitted for the abode of demons or for the ghastly magic rites of wizard sorceries. Twice we climb up the abrupt sides and down into the beds of vast, old burnt-out craters, where the innumerable piled volcanic rocks and heaped-up cones of sediment are covered for miles with a greenish blue dust, and spotted thinly with little evergreen argan trees. The panoramas from the heights were like magnified magic unrealities seen in some monstrous Easter-egg. As we pass over the crest into the next crater valley, the light grows strange, and distant thunder rolls; a rare

mountain storm is approaching. Half way up the slope, surrounded by a rugged confusion of stone, is an enormous rough cube of porous slag, seamed with black streaks of shiny obsidian; and in the center is the door of a cave, the home of the djinn of the mountain, who roars and growls from peak to peak. The Shelluh soldier who is our guide never for a moment takes his eye from the black doorway; in an awed whisper he tells us that a giant black man stands always within the cavern mouth, holding a great curved poignard in his hand. I catch a sideways glimpse of old Si Lhassen's face, always impassive with the calm, patriarchal beauty of age; he looks straight ahead but his thin blue lips are muttering prayers.

A cool, strong wind blows in our faces, rain falls in big drenching drops, the resinous scent of wet juniper fills the air. Every now and then we pass cairns of stones piled by frightened travellers who have dared the way before, each stone in memory of a prayer against the power of the djinn who haunts the strange valley. Most of the stones are small ones placed by trembling religious hands, but occasionally a cairn is topped by a heavy boulder, an amusing monument of human ostentation even before God and the Devil. The

storm soon blew over and our drenched clothes dried in a few minutes in the clear washed air.

We spent a week of long hard days going through the mountains, with scenery and temperature ever varying as we passed from peaks to warm green valleys and from valleys to precipitous peaks. Our highest point was nearly nine thousand feet, on Tizi Ouicheddán, along whose eagle-baffling sides black, bare, pointed rocks stand out in clusters at sharp angles, like great calibred howitzers, and the path is so steep that if an animal should miss his footing, he and the rider might roll a hundred feet before some craggy ledge could stop them. In an afternoon's climb, we go from the laurels and cacti and cornfields of the suffocating valley, to heights covered with scraggy olive trees; then on to a region of starved, struggling evergreens; and finally reach the barren, desolate summit, where nothing lives but hard, mossy, yellow everlasting and the great white hawks that wheel above us, and veer and swoop through the wind that blows between the worlds,—a fitting place to stage “Prometheus Unbound.”

When we had descended the other slope of Tizi Ouicheddán the difficult part of the way was over; the rest was a long, gradual descent to the plain.

On the morning of the last day, from one of the last heights, we gain our first view of the great, mysterious Souss, miles and miles of a vast extended plain shrouded in a vague haze of heat, the unknown, rich country visited only by a few travellers, an ancient center of Berber life, the prize of old conquests and the pride of long dead sultans.



*Nine*

THE FORBIDDEN SOUSS

**Live satisfied with little and thou shalt be a king.**

**ARAB PROVERB.**

## Nine

### THE FORBIDDEN SOUSS

THE last day of our descent down the long southern slope of the Atlas, we met with the burning breezes that blow westward from the terrible Sahara through the long African summer, drying up the rivers and streams that water the broad, rich plain, and parching the earth like the hot breath from an oven. Even under the scraggy shade of our noonday halting-place, sticks and tree trunks were painfully hot to the touch. The muddy water from an underground stone reservoir, strained through a corner of Lhassen's woolen *djellaba*, gave little relief to the burning thirst that made one's throat thick. The slope was occasionally broken by steep descents through twisted, woody trails, wild and difficult, or through thorny forests of argan trees, and down dangerous rocky stairways of loose stone. Except in these wild places, the region is populated with humble villages, stacked and terraced against the mountain-side, above little fertile table-lands, where irrigation

gives rich crops of figs, grapes, and watermelons, besides the staple products, barley, millet, and Indian corn.

As we passed through these little places with strange Shelluh names, almost always beginning with T,—Taouirt, Temsemal, Tedaret, Touloua and Tamtemmazer,—the natives greeted us good-naturedly; the women shyly gave Kbira a handful of green almonds or a bowl of goat's milk, and the men, with a hospitable word, handed us bunches of excellent Malaga grapes when we rode through their vineyards. We were on a little frequented trail; the people, not so accustomed to passing caravans, were more courteous to strangers than some of the tribes in the starved mountain valleys, and, having fuller crops, could afford to be generous. The rumoured hostility of the "fierce Soussi," the population of cutthroats and bandits, we did not find. The commands of the great over-lords not to molest Europeans, were apparently, effective, and the probability of much booty in our little caravan was too small to risk the punishment that might ensue.

Some of these villages were named from their marabout's shrine,—Sidi Bou Naga, Sidi Bou Aziz,—groups of huts huddled near a crudely built saint's tomb. Holy men, both living and dead, are

of the greatest importance in the life of Morocco. The cult of the marabouts is the real religion of the Berber village folk. There are mosques only in the larger towns, and the muezzin's call is not heard in the remote, secluded places. Thoughtful souls, mindful of the faithful Moslem's duty, may say their five daily prayers to the All Compassionate, and their lips, uttering a strange tongue, may proclaim and reiterate the Oneness of God, but their simple hearts turn toward the hundred tombs of old saints, whose sympathetic spirit-ears may understand their homely language and human yearnings better than the Great Arbiter of Destinies aloof in his golden grandeur. These saints were withered old men, living in desolate graveyards or under some hallowed tree, subsisting by alms of the charitable, wrapping their hearts ever in holy dreams, as they spent their years counting over on old black rosaries the ninety-nine Excellent Names of God. And when they died, the villagers built them humble little tombs on the hillside, bare and crude like their own dwellings; and here the devout will come and sit beside the coffin, knock three times to wake the sleeping saint, and whisper their hopes and needs. Then they go away, leaving some part of their garments as an offering, or perhaps a present of food for some younger living saint who

guards the shrine, and who, in his turn, may one day be translated into a local divinity.

Many of these marabouts' tombs have more than a local sanctity; pilgrims journey far to pay respect to a shrine whose holy renown has reached from valley to valley, and in certain seasons the ways that lead to sacred wells and mysterious caverns are thronged with folk who come with afflicted bodies and troubled hearts. And there are wild places in the rugged Atlas slopes around which cling some vague shadow of a sanctity the origin of which is long forgotten, but pious wayfarers breathe a prayer in passing and add a small stone to the memorial pile. On one of these hillsides descending to the Souss, each traveller places a stone in a forked branch of one of the gnarled dwarf evergreens through which the trail descends. The trees of the region are loaded with thousands of stones, but no one could tell me why. Perhaps, hundreds of years ago, an evil djinn had killed a man here, or some saint on a pilgrimage may have told his rosary here for the last time. The dead seem very near to the living in these Moroccan wildernesses, and the spirit world, with its sad old mystery and its grotesque terror, is an omnipresent reality. The worship of saints, the use of charms, the appeasing of devils and djinns are contrary to



#### **MARKET DAY.**

There are towns, named after the days of the week, that have practically no existence except on market day. Then from dawn till sunset they are thronging centers of life and bewildering activity.



the pure religion of the Prophet, but they are older than Islam, and in spite of the zealous fury of puritan reformers the soul of Africa has remained pagan.

These humble villages with their little orchards, terraced gardens, and local shrines, stretch along the southern Atlas slope between the market towns. The markets are named for the days of the week, El Arba, Wednesday, or El Khemis, Thursday, towns that have practically no existence except on market days. Then from dawn till sunset these *souks* are thronging centres of life and bewildering activity. Butchers, grain dealers, sellers of olives, oil, spices, and vegetables, donkey traders, camel merchants, pottery makers, and Jews who sell cloth and jewelry, all come once a week to supply the needs of the peasant villagers, and to trade their wares for the produce the villagers may bring in. For one day there is picturesque movement and fascinating local colour—absolutely black negro slaves in short ragged burnouses, brown Shelluh Berbers in striped *djellabas*, and dignified, canny Arab merchants in spotless white. Then toward sunset the crowd thins out, the villagers trot home on their little donkeys, the merchants camp in the *fondak* for the night, and the town is empty and deserted for another week.

We reached one of these towns in the plains, the Souk El Khemis, just at nightfall when the market was breaking up. While Monsieur Lapandéry and Si Lhassen bought half a sheep and a quantity of grapes for our dinner, Kbira and I enjoyed the admiration of a hundred gaping peasants and a vast drove of almost naked little imps, who blinked and stared or danced around us, sticking out their tongues and twisting their comic little faces into fantastic grotesques. Kbira sat demurely on her mule enjoying the situation, for only two years before she had been one of these funny little creatures herself.

The common people here in the plains are poor, for, though the soil is very rich and by means of irrigation can be made highly productive, the unsettled lawless state of the region in recent years, through continuous local feuds, has kept it desolate. And the lot of the lower orders in Morocco is wretched at best. The bandit tribesmen of the mountains leading a wild and dangerous life outside the pale are happier than the peace-loving valley folk whose lords and chiefs allow them no peace. But the people we met here at El Khemis on market day were pleasant and cheerful with a simple sense of fun. When I tried to photograph them they laughingly thrust forward a hideously

old negro into a prominent place, to his great rage and confusion.

By eight in the evening, very sore and weary from the last long day of riding through the unrelieved heat, we arrived at the house of two of Si Lhassen's sons-in-law, for this country of the Souss is our old Shelluh guide's native land. We waited long at the door for the house to be prepared to receive our unexpected visit. The little court, where the family principally live, must be cleared of goats and chickens and children, and the dirt floor carefully swept, and the women must have time to put on their best caftans. Our hosts were two young Shelluhs, stupidly pleasant with very dark brown eyes. They welcomed us with simple expressions of hospitality, offering all their means afforded to make us comfortable.

We pass into the little court, climb the notched beam which serves as a ladder, and install ourselves on the roof. The evening air is a joyous relief, and fragrant whiffs of excellent cookery steam up from the court below us, where the women, helped by chattering neighbours, are preparing a feast. I lie, pipe in mouth, chin on hand, looking down upon the busy groups about two round clay stoves. The ruddy charcoal flames throw bright reflections over their faces, as they ply the bellows, or lean over

the savoury smoking cooking-bowls. In one corner of the court, the light from a Moorish lantern falls upon quaintly shaped water jars and earthern platters, and in the midst, sits white bearded old Si Lhassen, enjoying his long kief pipe with inexpressible placidity. His younger daughter smiles indulgently at him from time to time, showing her perfect, white teeth. She sits peeling some curious long-necked vegetables with a curved dagger, and as she works, sings this Berber peasant song:

I have wandered everywhere in the whole world,  
I have travelled in every direction;  
I have seen there is nothing better in life for a man  
Than to rest in his own house,  
With wife and children beside him;  
Though there is only a single mat, simple and bare,  
Which he may lie upon when he has supped.

By half past ten, after the usual oriental ablutions and several glasses of mint-flavoured tea, a platter of excellent mutton stew is brought up to us, steaming hot and very peppery. We dip in with our hosts, who have the advantage of us in that their long practised fingers are less sensitive to hot handfuls of food, and I feel some regret as the clean platter is handed down the ladder. But the next course is a great roast, sufficient to satisfy more appetites than ours. And then comes the usual *kouskous* of steamed white millet walling in

a richly delicious mess of vegetables. And after grapes for dessert and many more glasses of tea, we stretch out in indolent ease and enjoy the sense of having achieved a quest. We have reached the forbidden Souss. And now what kind of life shall we find here, and what possible adventures are in store?

The full moon shines on a few deserted mud houses with gaping black holes in the roofs, and on a ghostly ruined kasba, destroyed long ago in some savage baronial feud. The broad rocky bed of the dry Oued Souss stretches for miles through the plain, which seems as white, desolate, and dead as the moon seen through a telescope. One fears to go to sleep in this intense inhuman silence, and longs for the cry of an owl or bark of a dog to give a hint that the world is still alive.

Early the next morning, Si Lhassen woke us, bringing generous cups of excellently brewed coffee with a rare aroma which only the orientals can produce. We lay back deliciously lazy on the rush mats spread out on the housetop, and sipped our coffee, and watched the rosy dawn-light flood the brown plains, the red-brown ruins, the rich green clumps of cacti and laurel that fringed the dry river bed, and the endless Atlas range that now loomed behind us to the north. Soon the coolness of the

night was over, and the sun drove us down into the house to find the most comfortable place to spend the day resting. We moved our mats to a darkened passage-way that opened on the court and caught whatever breath of air might be stirring; and I passed the time—a very hot and scorching time—sprinkling myself with native rose water, eating rich ripe grapes, smoking my oldest, sweetest pipe, and watching the women at their household tasks in the little courtyard.

Off from the court, opened two or three rooms and a passage-way which, in turn, led to several more. The only furniture was a few floor mats, which were carefully rolled up when not used to sit on. In one room was a loom with a half-woven woolen burnous in it, and in another dark hole, a huge mud oven. There were two quite primitive hand mills, one for grinding barley for bread, and the other for making cooking oil of argan nuts. One of the women sat in the shadow of the wall, making bread. She picked over a few handfuls of barley, blowing away the chaff that was still mixed with it after the simple winnowing in the field. The mill in which she ground the grain consisted merely of two round flat stones held in a baked mud casing which permitted the upper stone, which was fitted with a handle, to be turned round.

Where there are swift-flowing streams in Morocco there are water-mills, but these are for the rich; the humbler folk must grind their handful of grain wherever they prepare a meal. The woman smiled as she saw my interest in her simple housework, and as she turned the stone she sang the Shelluh song of

#### THE TWO MILLS

Said the water-mill to the hand mill: "Go to sleep!  
For, when the water rushes through the flume,  
Many a measure of grain will I grind."  
But the hand-mill in the house, answering replied:  
"I envy not your solitude of streams and gardens;  
It is with the tribe of fair charmers that I have my home,  
I am turned by the hands that bring soft caresses."

When the flour was ground it was kneaded into little round loaves and baked in the blackened oven, which had been heated with charcoal embers. When bread is wanted quickly, as it was the night of our unexpected arrival, it is baked in thin pancakes in a flat red earthen platter over the little clay stove.

The household duties were performed by the women in a very leisurely way. Life in the Souss is so free from complication that there is not much to worry about. Time has no value, and these people are too "uncivilised" to worship efficiency for its own sake. Their homes are simple, their

possessions very few, and their cookery always the same. The women have no beds to make, for their bed is a mat which is rolled up in the daytime; their daily cookery is usually limited to one dish for a meal; the dish-washing merely requires dipping the tea glasses in hot water and pouring the contents of the kettle over a single platter; their weaving does not keep them very busy, for the household wears but few clothes and wears them out; washing, a task not often thought necessary, consists in rubbing the garments on a flat stone in a running stream and hanging them on a bush to dry. And none of the duties in this simple existence are carried out with much expenditure of energy. There is always leisure for gossip or story-telling or singing, as the women sit together husking corn or washing in the river. And through the long lazy afternoons one sleeps. The occidental mind to be happy must be doing something, expending energy even to enjoy itself, but the oriental finds perfect happiness in doing nothing, and values sleep as one of the highest goods. An eastern proverb says:

It is better to stand still than to run;  
It is better to sit than to stand;  
It is better to lie down than to sit;  
It is better to sleep than to wake.

The news of our arrival had reached the great Shereefa Moulay Ali, a descendant of the Prophet and an important chief in this part of the Souss. He sent word that he would come to pay us a visit and conduct us to his own kasba where he hoped we should remain for some time as his guests. In the hottest part of the hot afternoon he arrived, a very simple and affable, white-bearded old gentleman in a patched white *dejellaba* and very old slippers, but a large and spotless turban. He has the dignity of a patriarch, and the sureness of his social position as a member of a Shereefian family makes him simply and naturally democratic. He comes bobbing along seated sideways on the croup of a very small donkey, like one of his humblest retainers, his old babooches dangling from the tips of his toes. At the low doorway of the house he slides off his comic mount, and is respectfully greeted by the male householders with whom he familiarly shakes hands. We go through the elaborate formalities of Arab courtesy, "Peace be with thee!" "Safety be with thee!" "Allah's blessing upon thee!" "May he prolong thy days!" "May he protect thy house!" "May he increase thy goods!"

There is a kindly and pleasant twinkle in the old Shereefa's small eyes as we sit down together on

the mat. His cordiality is sincere, for our visit will relieve the lotus-eating monotony of his serene, patriarchal life. Hospitality to the oriental is not only a sacred duty, but a pleasant opportunity of contact with the world, and a chance for gossip and the exchange of ideas. We converse in Arabic, and Si Lhassen and his sons-in-law sit in respectful silence not understanding a word. The old Shereefa has travelled about Morocco and often makes visits to Marrakesh. He has a canny knowledge of the world and a genuine liking for the French. His son, in fact, who to our disappointment is not at home, has even visited France.

Monsieur Lapandéry finds it somewhat difficult to explain to the Shereefa just what my occupation is, for a university professor in a Moslem country must of course be a religious person, an Alcoranic doctor living in holy sanctity and steeped in sacred thought. This does not accurately describe me. And so Monsieur Lapandéry introduces me as a writing master who teaches boys their A. B. C. Moulay Ali is much amused at meeting this sort of a Nazarene, and merrily recalls the stinging switch that his writing master found an aid to instruction in calligraphy.

After the usual three glasses of mint-flavoured tea and a half hour's talk, we bid farewell to our



#### SOUSSI PEASANT TYPES.

They are simple good-natured folk, shepherds and agriculturists. They showed no hostility to foreigners, but were usually difficult to photograph because they had no notion of cameras.



hosts and ride across the dry river bed and burning dry plain to the kasba of Moulay Ali. The little group around the doorway wave us good-bye, and then sit down to discuss the visit of the great Shreefa and congratulate the hosts on the honour that has come upon their house.

The Shreefian families, to one of which Moulay Ali belongs, are very numerous in Morocco. Their descent from the Prophet gives them a specially sanctified character, although they are not necessarily religious men, and a social prestige far greater than that which wealth alone may give. In fact, many of these Shreefs are gentle loafers with no other means of support than their reputed ancestry. They attach themselves to some sheik or wealthy townsman and become one of his numerous hangers-on. How pure blooded Berbers like Moulay Ali can pretend to a descent in the male line from the daughter of the Prophet is not very clear. Possibly he may claim it through some distant Almohade ancestor, for the founder of that Berber dynasty successfully established his long and imposing genealogy of saintly names beginning with the Prophet himself.

After a half hour's ride through the white hazy air of three o'clock in the afternoon, we reach the new mud-built kasba of Moulay Ali, a rudely im-

posing stronghold in the pasture land south of the Oued Souss. We cross two great outer courtyards, where the flocks are kept at night, and go through several dark, roughly beamed passageways, that lead to a small inner court. A narrow stairway goes up to a corridor with three Moorish arches made in sun-baked clay; and off this, opens our apartment, a dark, very plain room with three little latticed windows that pierce the thick walls, and admit slant, narrow shafts of burning sunlight, that fall in little spotted lozenges on the floor. Everything in the castle is so plain as to give a sense of emptiness. The three clay arches are the only approach to art or decoration. There are no pavements, no tiles or mosaics, not even plaster. Everything is stark in its simplicity. Our room is furnished with two barbarically gorgeous carpets woven in banded designs of brilliant colour, a startling contrast to the brown monotony of everything else in the kasba.

Moulay Ali's life is no more complex than that of the peasant folk we have just visited. Although he is wealthy and powerful, his ideal of life is not the gathering together of "things." His wealth consists in hundreds of fat sheep, sleek goats, and a huge troop of asses and camels, all of which are tended during the day by a dozen or so of children

and a few drivers. At night the flocks and troops are driven into the courtyards of the stronghold, and the vast wooden gates are barred at sunset, just as the Shereefa is saying his evening prayer. This is life in the patriarchal age. Moulay Ali is only one degree removed in his way of living from the nomadic Abraham and Esau.

Our host ushers us into our apartment, and a slave pours water over our hands and brings the charcoal brazier and the kettle for tea. The Shereefa is most oriental in the cordiality of his welcome. With smiling eyes and genial manner he tells us we are as members of his own family and safer than his own life. To be hospitable to strangers is his greatest pleasure. If we will stay a month with him as his guests, he will kill a sheep every day! In his hand he always carries two massive keys ten inches long, like St. Peter, and I wonder what they may open. With his benignant patriarchal smile and his flowing robes he would make a wonderful model for an old Italian painter.

Funny little black boys scantily clothed in a rag each, come staggering in, embracing huge watermelons that have been picked before dawn and kept in a dark closet. St. Peter lays aside his keys, draws his long poignard from its richly ornamented sheath, and severs three melons one after

the other at a blow, until he finds one perfect enough for his guests. He continues chatting merrily, and brandishes the wicked looking poignard as he gesticulates. As I watch the flashing arcs of the blade the thought occurs to me that it has not always been used to slice melons.

Moulay Ali professes the greatest admiration for the French. The victory of the Allies in the War has made a profound impression on the Soussi and the tribes in other unsubdued regions of Morocco. Success in war means a kind of superiority which they can understand and appreciate. They accept the eventual French occupation as the inevitable will of Allah. During the War, German agents tried to stir them up, and, it is rumoured, made considerable headway in this very region with Moulay Ali's over-lord, the caïd at Aoulouz, but Moulay Ali leaned always on the side of the French. He also professes an admiration for America, which he has heard of in a vague way as strong in wealth and military power. And though he knows me only as an American "writing-master" he many times expresses the hope that we should be friends forever. During our talk we shake hands in the bonds of an eternal guest-friendship.

As we sit chatting and drinking tea in this upper

chamber, we are startled by fearful sounds coming through the window that looks on the outer court, sounds as of the slaughtering of a whole zoo. It proves to be nothing but the bellowings and snortings of three or four camels that are being loaded. The ill-natured beasts groan and snarl and try to bite, although almost nothing is being packed on their backs, but this is the usual habit of these creatures, the most evil tempered of all domestic animals. They twist their long necks around, showing their ugly faces, their heavy eyelids and cynical mouths, disgruntled with life and ever scornful of the world. But these are not the ordinary camels of the Moroccan Bled; they are white dromedaries, tall, magnificently built animals that thrive only in the intense heat of the Great Sahara itself, the true "ships of the desert."

The dromedaries belong to some strange, striking fellows, evidently of another race than the Shelluh Berbers. These men are graceful as Greek statues, supple in their movements as wild animals, finely handsome with perfect white teeth, very dark skins, and long black hair to their shoulders, and their eyes have the superb haughty freedom of men who dwell in the Great Desert. Moulay Ali tells us they are a party of distant tribesmen, his especial friends, who live eight days' journey by camel,

to the southeast, over the distant ranges of the Middle Atlas, in the land of Mauretania. He goes down to the court and invites two of the men to drink tea with us before they set out for home. They wear long baggy white breeches and light flowing loose robes of dark blue, and dark blue turbans. One of them comes in ready for his long ride, his face swathed like a Moslem woman in a blue veil to protect him from the heat and dust, only his deep eyes showing, like wells in the twilight. He unwinds the veil and sits with us on the mat—an Antinoüs carved in dark marble.

These Mauretanians have ever been a wild free people, nomads roaming over the western desert, owing allegiance to none but their tribal Chief, except when stirred and united by some fanatical reformer of Isham, when they have carried the Holy War to Marrakesh itself. Their language is Arabic, and they have little in common with the sedentary Shelluh of the Souss. Antinoüs with graphic gestures describes their country. It is a land of sand, sand, sand, with never a palm tree. The only things that grow are scrubby bushes and short grasses on which their camels and flocks feed. Their food is milk and goat's flesh. Water they carry from distant wells and store in reservoirs. Theirs is a land of burning sun and cloudless skies,

with rarely a drop of rain. They are a roaming free people who dwell under the tent, and despise those who live in houses and pay taxes.

Soon the Mauretanians mount their magnificent dromedaries and ride off toward the southern mountains, their heads held high and their dark blue garments fluttering in the wind. And my heart yearns to go with them to see the barren land that produces such men. In truth these must be the "blameless men" with whom the gods of Homer were wont to dine in the Land of *A*Ethiopia.

Strange, that romance should be always somewhere else! Two weeks ago it was here in the heart of the forbidden Souss, but now it lies in the wild barren land of the blue Mauretanians down toward the fabulous Mountains of the Moon.



*Ten*

PRISONERS AT AOULOUZ

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,  
With half-shut eyes ever to seem  
Falling asleep in a half-dream!  
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,  
Which will not leave the myrrh bush on the height;  
To hear each other's whispered speech;  
Eating the Lotus day by day.

## *Ten*

### PRISONERS AT AOULOUZ

WE had scarcely been a day in the castle of the hospitable patriarch when the news of a party of *Roumi*\* having arrived in the Souss reached the lord of our division of the province, Si Larbi Ou Derdouri, caïd of Ras El Oued, who is the son-in-law of the powerful over-lord, the Goundafi. He sent one of his personal body-guard, a cross-eyed soldier with a long muzzle-loading gun, to escort us to his vast castle at Aoulouz ("Land of Almonds"), a few hours' ride up the valley of the Souss.

In the morning we set out after cordial farewells with hospitable good-feeling from Moulay Ali, and a blessing from the marabout who always sits with him at meals, muttering prayers and doing prostrations all through the conversation. We look back as the road turns, and catch a glimpse of our patriarchal host still waving at us and still clutching in one hand the great keys of St. Peter. The

\* *Roumi*, "Romans," i.e., "Foreigners."

plain, a stony, barren extent cut by dry stream beds, is already burning and torrid. Even the Barbary fig cacti have shrivelled up into sickly yellow clumps and the wild olives are twisted and tortured with thirst. Innumerable flocks of sheep are finding nourishment on dry, woody weeds and thistles and the withered stubble of straw in the reaped barley fields. This is the aspect in August of a land, which the natives tell me is a luxuriant garden in the spring. There are still two or three green oases where a perpetual water supply permits irrigation. The irrigation systems are elaborate networks of canals; each region is flooded in turn on successive days.

We stop at one of these oases to rest, and the cross-eyed soldier hunts out a melon that has been protected from the sun in a thick field of maize. We drink from any canal that is not too muddy; if there are crawling things in the water, one strains it through a handkerchief or the corner of a burnous. Long ago we decided that germs are more tolerable than thirst.

By noon we reach the great castle of Aoulouz. As the Caïd Si Larbi is away on a visit, we are received at the outer gate by his brother, the Caliph Haj Abderrahman ("Slave of the Compassionate"), a sleek, well-fed person with an un-

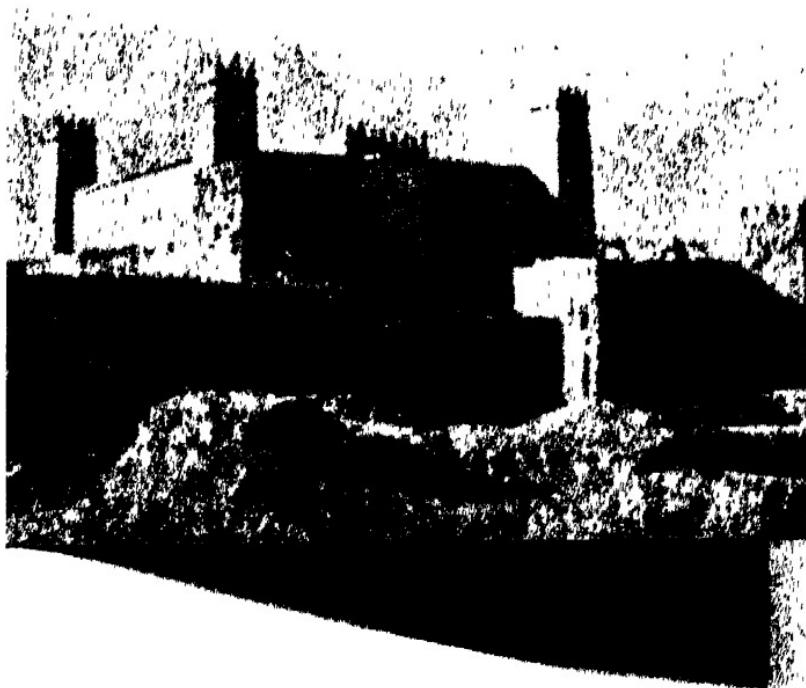
pleasant eye. His pilgrimage to Mecca, which gives him the title of Haj, does not seem to have broadened his horizon very much; he speaks only his own Shelluh dialect. He receives us coldly and gives us in charge of a black major-domo, a confidential family slave. We are led into a white plastered court with a little jet of water in the centre, spattering into a small basin with orange and almond trees grouped about it. Off from the court are three large rooms with tall painted doors, and windows grilled with twisted iron gratings. The shutters and the arched ceilings are decorated with arabesques in blue, red, and green. The floors are covered with beautiful thick Moorish carpets woven at Marrakesh, and one chamber has the walls covered with a single huge silk hanging, embroidered in panelled Moorish arches of brilliant colours.

Black boys bring water for washing our hands, then coffee and a *kouskous* of mutton stewed with yellow tomatoes and wild pears. When tea is served the fat caliph comes in, and a long conversation ensues. We have come without permission. The country is not open to foreigners. We cannot be allowed to roam around at will. We shall have to remain here as the caïd's "guests" until he decides what to do with us! We shall have good

treatment, but we must stay under guard in the vicinity of the castle.

The caliph leaves us, and we settle down to reconcile ourselves to captivity in this luxurious prison. The fact of the case seems to be that Haj Abderrhaman is embarrassed by our presence. He knows that the French Protectorate does not consider it safe for Europeans to wander at large in the Souss and that it forbids their coming. The Soussi do not seem to object to our presence, for we have met with no expressions of ill-will or suspicion, but Haj Abderrhaman probably fears that should we be murdered by bandits, complications with the French might ensue and he and his brother the caïd would be held responsible. They have no wish to give occasion for the sending of machine guns and hated Senegalese troops. Later, the caliph decides to send a messenger to Taroudant, the most important city of the Souss, some fifty miles west of here, where there is a mission of two or three French information officers, who keep an eye on native affairs. Meanwhile, here we are as prisoners, with nothing to do but lie about on silk mattresses and embroidered cushions, and watch the shadows lengthen through the long, blazing afternoon.

Our siesta is disturbed by various of the caïd's



#### THE KASBA OF THE CAID LARBI OU DERDOURI, AT AOULOUZ.

These square, mud-walled castles are the characteristic architecture of southern Morocco. These are the strongholds of the feudal barons who are constantly at war with one another.



retainers, who are moved by curiosity to come in to visit us and get the latest news of the world, which means Marrakesh to them, for their imaginations do not go much farther. Among them comes Si Taïb, another brother of the caïd, a villainous looking chap in the twenties. The big ugly scar down one side of his face gives him a savage appearance, but he is really very mild and stupid, with a dull curiosity about foreigners. He has a weakness which frequently obsesses very ugly people, for having his picture taken, and to satisfy his vanity I snap him in a half dozen poses with an empty camera. When we begin to be bored by the very personal interest of these various idle gentlemen, the call of the muezzin takes them off to prayer and we are left in peace.

Little Kbira and the younger Lhassen play about the court and get each other very wet splashing in the fountain. The doves moan from the high roofs. The flat twang of an African lute and the lazy laughter of women come through a mysterious locked door in a white arched passage-way that leads to the women's apartments. Kbira peeps through the keyhole and runs away bubbling with amusement; what she saw was another inquiring eye!

In the evening, we sit about on the rich carpet,

the curtain over the doorway caught up to let in any wandering breath of air the night may bring. The candle, twisted by the heat, stuck in a huge brazen candlestick in the middle of the floor, casts yellow gleams on the faces of us prisoners lying lazy and hot on the silk cushions; it softens the crude arabesques of the arched ceiling and makes mysterious darknesses in the deep window casements, where lizards may sleep and scorpions lurk. Out in the court, the full moon silvers the almond trees and throws wonderful black shadows on the strangely blue-white walls and carved plaster arches. The muezzin calls the night prayer in his uncanny falsetto wail which echoes in the courtyard and dies into mournful silence. Old Si Lhassen, who is squatting against the wall, rises for the invocation and then makes the threefold prostration before the name of God. He groans and mumbles his prayers in his beard, and brings a childhood recollection of my old grandfather asking the blessing at table.

Monsieur Lapandéry walks up and down the chamber singing in his magnificent baritone the songs of old France, fine old peasant songs, generations old. He twirls his heavy moustaches, gesticulates in the manner of old-fashioned opera, and lets his voice out to the full, and the sombre

African night is startled by these far-away songs heard here for the first time:

Et pourtant je regrette  
Les jolis yeux bleus de seize ans!

At ten o'clock the Ethiopian major-domo leads in two slaves bearing on their heads trays, covered with peaked straw cones. I eat ravenously of the *tajine*, or stew, and the vegetable *kouskous*, and roll over on my mattress in the court, and fall asleep under the twinkling stars, to the thin strains of Moorish music and the faint throb of a tom-tom in some distant part of the palace.

Our prison life is a monotonously luxurious eating of the lotus day by day. I am awakened in the cool fresh morning by a cup of Si Lhassen's excellent coffee, just as the sun touches the tops of the orange and almond trees, in which dozens of birds are making a delightfully discordant rivalry. As there is nothing to get up for, I smoke a cigarette and sleep again, lulled by the mourning doves that moan from the square kasba tower just above us. Then I am awakened again to eat a bowl of vermicelli and a platter of grapes and ripe figs. After that, of course, there is tea. About eleven o'clock we go into another court where a swift-flowing ice-cold stream, which has run for miles through an

underground conduit, breaks forth into a square basin, which with its lining of soft green moss, makes a delightful bathtub. At noon come in two dishes of *kouskous*, and an hour later, coffee and mint tea. I spend the afternoon lying on the gay carpets and cushions in the great darkened state chamber and shout for young Lhassen whenever my pipe needs refilling. My only use for a brain is the assistance it gives in adding a few words to my vocabulary of Berber. At half past four, we drink an *apéritif* of rum and water and have another meal of *kouskous* to stay our hunger till dinner, which comes at ten at night.

One great surprise was to find that the caïd has an automobile, an old French machine he bought at Mogador on the coast, some hundred miles away. A French chauffeur brought it over the bumpy camel trail to Taroudant, and from there the caïd has by a little scraping and raking made a kind of road through the plain to Aoulouz. The chauffeur is an amusing character who has been in Morocco four months without learning a single word of Arabic, and did not even know that the language spoken around him is Berber. He leads a life of infinite laziness and loneliness. He passes the time scrawling rude pictures on the white walls of his room, innumerable hearts pierced with arrows,

very décolleté ladies with Cimabue faces all labelled "Ninette," and an expressionless side elevation of a "Madeleine-Bastille" autobus with a portrait of himself at the wheel. The drawings show more sentiment than perspective. Strange, self-exiled soul, thinking of his beloved boulevard.

He has brought with him as interpreter, a handsome little eleven-year-old Arab named Omar, who has learned some French in the Franco-Arab school at Mogador. Omar is marvellously picturesque in his long robe of exquisite peacock blue, and he has the face of angel infancy, but he is really descended from Chitane, the Father of Lies. Under the pretext of translation he makes the chauffeur say the most absurd things to the caïd and the calipha, and is constantly the cause of the most amusing misunderstandings. These are partly due to Omar's lack of knowledge of the language he pretends to translate and partly to his impish nature. Half the chauffeur's time is spent chasing Omar around the palace in attempts to administer well merited chastisement, hurling all the slippers in sight at the flying peacock robe, to the joyous delight of the dignified owners of the slippers.

The chauffeur has an ancient copy of *La Vie Parisienne*, which we take turns at reading aloud.

The natives stare at the bizarre pictures in vague wonder, for images and pictures are absolutely out of the lives of these strict Moslems of Morocco. They solemnly whisper as they turn the pages and seem very much mystified. The alluringly indiscreet high-stepping damsel on the cover, gaily driving a pair of very red lobsters harnessed with blue ribbons, can hardly seem to their placid imaginations the representation of anything in heaven above or the earth beneath or the waters under the earth.

Everything moves slowly here. As the chauffeur puts it, life runs on second speed. There are numberless retainers and slaves, but nobody seems to be working. A meal is brought in; we wait twenty minutes for the ewer and basin for washing; we wait fifteen more for fresh water to drink. If there are several courses we wait long between each, and we wait sometimes an hour afterward for the tea service to come. Time means nothing in Morocco; except for pashas and caïds it is a world without energy or ambition. If it is written in the Book of God that you are to be a serf or a prince, nothing can change that decree. So why struggle? No activity is ever apparent here but the slow carrying of water jars or covered dishes, or the indolent labour of a few workmen in the

caïd's new-built garden. Sleeping in the shade of a wall or quietly chatting by lantern light are the most apparent occupations in the palace.

The life of these great Berber lords in the Souss is a life of indolence rather than of what we should call luxury. It is a life of large patriarchal plenty, simple, easy, and monotonous. There is very little art in it, nothing subtle in architecture. The great palace-castles like this of our caïd have a certain impressive Babylonian massiveness, but the detail of the iron-work, wood-work, and arabesque painting is crude and quaint. There are embroideries and carpets, it is true, but they do not have the sophisticated elegance of Persian, Arabic, and Turkish textiles. This is not a decadent civilisation like that of the northern cities, Rabat and Fez, but a patriarchal life which has remained the same for at least two thousand years. The Saracenic civilisation has only touched the Berbers on the surface. The marvels of art achieved in Spain, in Fez, and in old Marrakesh, though built by Berber sultans, were wholly of Arab inspiration.

The caliph Haj Abderrhaman is very proud of his single diamond set in a silver ring. (For good Moslems do not wear gold.) He also showed us a small agate and a carnelian he carries in his purse, but there are no Aladdin dreams of jewels and

wealth here. The wealth is in flocks, corn, and oil. And the rich lord does not spend his riches on art or on expensive amusements. His satisfaction is in the power his wealth and place give him. The democracy of these absolute chieftains is another thing surprising to us who live in so-called democratic countries. The calipha invites not only his sheiks and vassal barons to eat from the same dish with him, but even personal attendants and soldiers.

The lazy days of our captivity are relieved by very few incidents. The calipha and Monsieur Lapandéry sometimes have long conversations on commercial matters, the selling of oil, almonds, and sheep. An agreement is hard to reach. The fat calipha is suave but very firm. He must have all the money in advance, and then, if Allah be willing, promises to deliver the oil in six months. As there is no power but Allah to hold him to his agreement, trade conditions are not easy; perhaps it is written that the oil shall not be delivered. And so they argue, with much good nature on both sides and with many cups of tea.

One night Lulú the hound, who is very much bored by this life in an ultra-Mohammedan community, where there are no other dogs to fight with, arranged a battle to the death with a very

savage black cat. The uproar of yowls and barks, together with the encouraging shouts of Kbira and the hurling of properties by Lapandéry and me, roused the whole palace guard, who are usually to be found fast asleep at their respective posts, and actually gave us a thrill of excitement for a few midnight minutes. On another evening, when Taïb, the caïd's younger brother, was taking tea with us, he observed that we put a drop of rum in ours, and expressed the desire to taste the drink that is forbidden by the Prophet. He took a few sips and sneezed, but decided that rum might be productive of some amusement if he could get enough of it. After he left us, he sent a servant back to ask for a small cupful on the plea that his wife was ill. We grudgingly gave it, and then he sent again for a second supply. What he did with it was not to drink it himself, as we imagined, but give it to three soldiers, who not accustomed to spirits, ran wild. They tore about the great court, yelling and brandishing their poignards and pounding their heads against the wall. One of them tried to slice off the ears of everybody within reach. With some difficulty he was captured and put in a pit with a stone over the mouth, and he howled there for several hours.

A life of nothing but eating I find is dull. The

monotony of patriarchal civilisation is oppressive. I am beginning to suspect that the disillusioned Philistine who said, "Toute l'orient, c'est une blague!" was perhaps right. I used to wonder what profound mysteries, what deep truths of life old bearded Arabs pondered as they sat for hours, their backs against a wall and their eyes turned inward. I suspect now that they think of nothing. And I have become just like them. Life is merely a succession of faintly perceived sounds and shadows, and now and then comes *kouskous* and tea. That is all! But the philosopher will say that that is all life is anyway, and so perhaps I have come to a true understanding of it, and perhaps the orientals are right in just letting it float by.

At any rate, the life here is picturesque, filled with strange little groups and bits of composition, which the camera can rarely seize without creating a self-consciousness in the subjects. I go and sit in the outer gateway of the great court with half a dozen other loafers and ten coal black pickaninnies, and wait for something to turn up. An old slave comes by clothed in half a rag, carrying two big earthen platters, one balanced on his head and one on his upstretched arm. A naked black boy who has been pounding gypsum for plaster, passes like a white Greek statue come to life. A negress

loaded with bangles and bead necklaces balances a huge water jar on her shoulder, and glances scornfully at the impudent soldiers on guard. Old Yaccoub, a bearded peddler in black Jewish skull-cap and gaberdine, strolls past with an armful of scarves from Fez, woven in crimson and yellow silk.

In the early evening, the glamour of twilight changes the aspect of these scenes from the picturesqueness of a photograph to the deep romantic mood of a sombre etching, always strangely beautiful and always a little sad. The white clad figures moving homeward in the dusk, the inevitable beggar crying at the gate, and the groups of laughing dark-faced idlers round a gleaming lantern, become shadowy symbols of the toil and tears and rest of the world. The eternal rumble of the river of Time is heard in the hollow sound of the imprisoned stream that rushes under the stone pavement of the great courtyard, and the sad hope of Religion is in the prolonged, solemn chaunting that comes up every afternoon from the school for saints, and fills the soft night with monotonous peace and dies away. I catch a glimpse of the little sanctuary lamps quietly glowing before the prayer niche in the tiny mosque. The young neophytes on the roof stop their chaunting as I pass, and look

down on me with an admiration mingled with contempt.

If the early evening is cool enough, we stroll out at sunset time in the fields and olive groves around the palace. Two tall blacks armed with curved poignards in beautiful brass scabbards swung from crimson shoulder cords, follow on either side as escorts. There is a huge threshing floor where two teams of little oxen and asses, fifteen abreast, are driven in a perpetual circle, as they tread out heaps of barley straw; and the fat animals are rejoicing in the Levitical command which sayeth, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." Nearby, thirty or forty serfs and slaves, helped by the evening breeze, are languidly winnowing a vast pyramid of grain. Squatting near a brushwood hut, a dozen women are husking corn, chattering and singing as they work. The sun goes down. The overseer gives a sign, and serfs and slaves send up three feeble shouts. The day's labor is done, and they all saunter slowly away, some to sit grouped under an olive tree and drink tea. Thousands of sheep and black goats are filing down the paths of the scraggy hillsides, driven by languid shepherd boys; a dozen fine big dromedaries stride homeward with lazy awkwardness, cropping olive branches as they come. A cool

breeze springs up and brings across the plain snatches of Shelluh songs and the faint rhythm of a tom-tom, which seems to express the sad monotony of the soul of Africa.

The great kasba, like an Assyrian city, with its four castellated towers and its walls within walls, stands out clear against the sunset; the jagged line of western mountains radiates a million golden filaments like the glow of boreal lights, and the air is filled with a strange, green, luminous haze which blends into the pale rose of mother of pearl. To the north, dark and forbidding, lofty and vast, like Ossa piled on Pelion, with broken, black, tusky peaks on the sky line, stands planted the Great Southern Atlas, the barriers that have kept back the Phoenicians, the Romans, and the Arabs, and preserved the primitive life and language of the Berbers for two thousand years. Overhead, two black hawks sail and swoop from the deep turquoise zenith. From the square squat minaret of the kasba mosque the muezzin intones, "*Allah akbar! Allah akbar! La ilâha illallâh!*" As his prolonged, quavering wail dies away, silent figures here and there in the twilight landscape, with their backs to the sunset, prostrate themselves in prayer, and the violet haze of night falls over the hills.



*Eleven*

**THE DAMSEL WITH THE LUTE**

Is this the falling night or thy smoothe black hair?  
Is this the gleaming moon or thy wondrous face?  
Is this a narcissus flower or thy white eyelid?  
Are these little rows of white hailstones or thy bright teeth?  
Are these two little ivory gourds upon thy bosom, or are they  
thy breasts?  
Is this the restless desert sand beneath thy silken caftan, or  
is it thy supple body?  
If thou couldst but know how I yearn for thee thou wouldst  
say,  
"Is this madness or is it love?"

YAZID EBN MOAOUIA.

## *Eleven*

### THE DAMSEL WITH THE LUTE

A S the peaceful days of our captivity wear on, amid quaint scenes and strange quiet beauty, we gradually fall into the Eastern way of life and come to enjoy the calm desuetude which is the ideal of the older world. The calm of the orient is not the dull placidity of Holland in repose, or the inane, vacuous torpor of the American Sunday mood, with its conscious virtue in acquiring merit by imposed leisure; but rather the calm of beatitude, the acceptance of peace as the normal state of soul, to which occasional activity comes as a regrettable divagation. The orient adores monotony as the west does variety. It enjoys hearing the same music, the same poems, delights in the same perfumes, the same colours, the same designs. Its art consists in infinite beautiful repetitions, and its poetry in subtle variations on age-old themes. The changeful interruption of western life does not appeal to the east, and practical western "improvements" in living are vaguely wondered at rather

than desired. A wealthy native may take a fancy to own a kerosene lamp, or an extravagant prince may buy an automobile; these things are romantically beautiful and remote to them. This is their appeal rather than the thought of useful innovation.

In writing of southern Morocco as "the orient" I am speaking of the temper of its civilisation, for although geographically it is the "Land of the Setting Sun," \* in spirit it has more oriental conservatism than Asia Minor or India. Then too, I am describing southern Morocco as I see it at the present moment. There are other forces in oriental hearts besides this love of monotony and the joy of calm. The fanaticism of religion, or blind loyalty to some grasping lord, may suddenly change this peaceful region, where life itself seems all but arrested, into a land torn by wild guerilla warfare and brutal pillage. Of this side of Morocco one may read in the narratives of French observers during the period of conquest, which in some regions is not yet over, or has not yet begun. But the unprogressive life of little effort and the dreaming quiet of these long afternoons represent the ideal of the Moor, the oriental attitude to existence.

\* Maghreb El Akse.

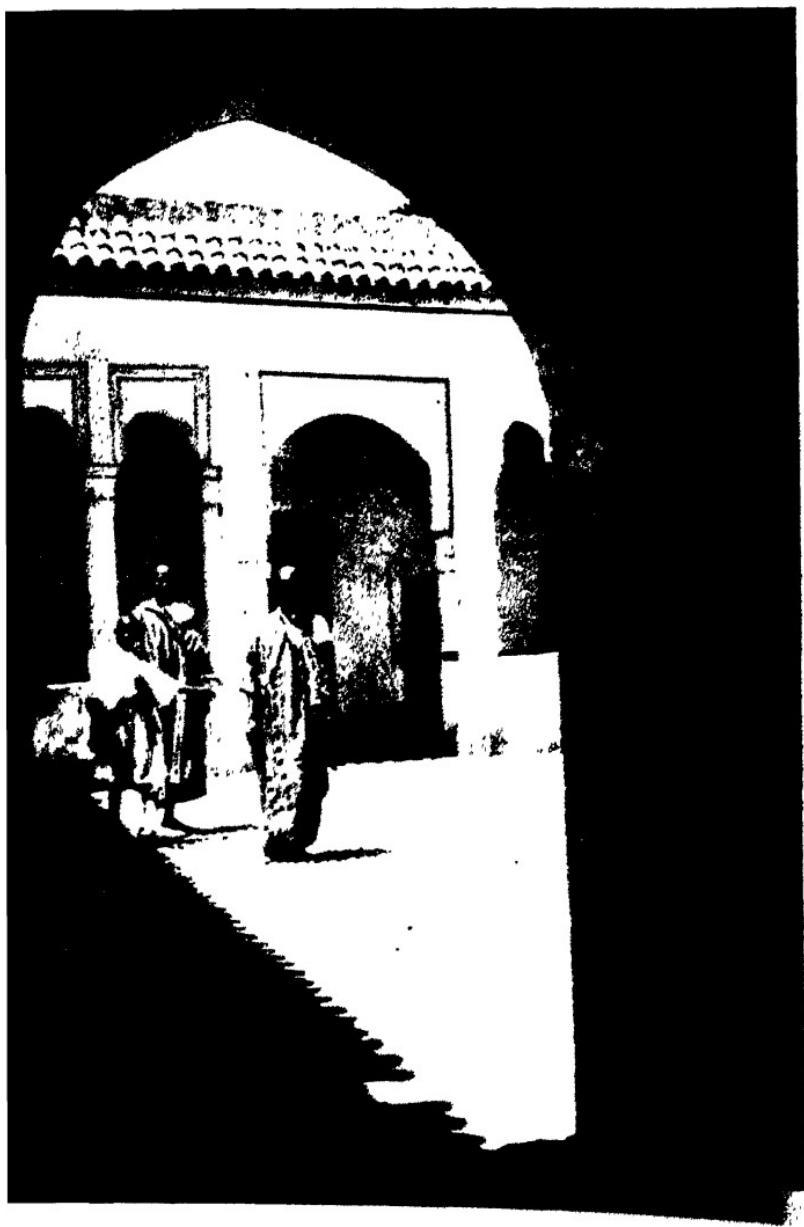
The Arab gentleman, or the Berber caïd, finds his recreation in the contemplation of quiet waters in shady gardens, or in long conversations among friends eating together and drinking innocuous drinks, or in watching slow sensuous dancing and hearing monotonously enervating music.

One afternoon, our host and jailor the caliphā, the Slave of the Compassionate, invites us to one of these entertainments at his own kasba, a mile or so away from the old castle of his brother the caïd, where we are living. With the delightful vagueness of this world in which time has no significance, we are asked to come some time in the afternoon. At about half past three we arrive at the kasba, which, with its impressively solid towers and walls suggestive of barbaric strength rather than of comfortable living, rises in the middle of the bare brown plain. We wait long in a dark high-built entrance way, as crude and bare as a peasant's hut; and then are conducted into the palace itself, a marked contrast, newly built of fired brick, and cleanly plastered everywhere. We pass through dazzling white spacious courtyards, through narrow passages and stairways and suites of darkened chambers, that give an impression of whiteness, silence, and emptiness. Everywhere our bare feet sink into soft carpets of gorgeous dye, resplendent

as Keats's tiger-moth, carpets from the mountains, from the Souss, from Marrakesh and Rabat, and one a hideous German machine-made thing, doubtless a gift from a political agent. (Coals to Newcastle, and poor quality at that!)

In one long room, where besides the rich carpets there is a great piece of silk embroidery on the wall, we pass an amusing group of five very black damsels in comically voluminous garments, some in vivid magenta and some in bright saffron, caught up in the middle with huge girdles. "They are black but comely, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon." They wear their hair in long braids and have big plugs of silver in one ear, and their names are five sweet symphonies, Leïla, Tahra, Aïcha, Hyzzya, and Kadijah.

The reception room has a table and two European chairs, I fancy the only ones in the Souss, but we prefer to sit on cushions and play with our feet as the Moors do. Aïcha with solemn, scared face serves us with coffee, and the other ebony hand-maidens stand in the door and roll the whites of their eyes. My costume is much admired, straw-coloured pajamas, the gift of the Red Cross in Macedonia and a grey dressing gown bought in Bucharest. The major-domo asks me if this is the national dress of the "Meriki." Presently the



HOUSEHOLD SERVANTS IN THE COURTYARD OF THE KASBA  
AT AOULOUZ.



Slave of the Compassionate arrives. As is usual in Moorish social affairs, nothing happens at first. We sit quietly together scarcely exchanging a word, waiting for the refreshments. In due time, Leïla, Tahra, Aïcha, Hyzyya, and Kadijah bring in three dishes, one after another roast mutton with a rich tomato sauce, chicken baked with olive oil and smothered with raisins and onions, and a peppery mutton stew, and then fragrant mint tea. The chauffeur, who is with us, is a great favourite with the caliph; he is really the court jester. His huge appetite is a theme always good. The seneschal of the palace, who sits at the left of the serene caliph, picks out handfuls of specially hot peppers disguised in gravy and offers them to the always hungry chauffeur. The resulting explosion of the voluble young Frenchman immoderately delights the Slave of the Compassionate.

As we while away another hour over grapes and tea, Leïla, Tahra, Aïcha, Hyzyya, and Kadijah ceremoniously carry in a huge German phonograph with a megaphone like a gigantic pink morning-glory. We listen to innumerable records of Arab music—band selections from Cairo, singers from Tunis, Casablanca, and Tangier. But oriental music on a phonograph has no more charm than a collection of dried wild flowers. It must be inter-

preted by flashing eyes, gestures full of meaning, and bodies swaying in rhythmic dance. We ask if there are no troops of the famous Shelluh singers and dancers in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately there are none about at present, but there is a boy, the calipha tells us, one of the hundred hangers-on of the palace, who aspires to be a troubadour.

The boy is sent for. He is a ragged little chap with a pleasing face and a shy manner. He is rather frightened at the honour come suddenly upon him, but after a moment's meditation and a few taps on the square tambourine he has brought along, he begins to chant the proverbial sayings of Sidi Hammou. Sidi Hammou is a half legendary figure to whom most of the proverbial wisdom and the satirical songs of the Souss are attributed. He seems to have been a troubadour born here at Aoulouz in the sixteenth century. The songs are in a sort of rhythmic prose. The boy begins with a set formula and chants the pieces, filling in the pauses with a roulade on the square tambourine.

May God keep Sidi Hammou, the singer, the sage, the poet.

He said, that poor man:

They have trampled upon the flowers of the earth, the men  
of old time;

The people of to-day, they live in the autumn of the world.

When the workers ask leave to go, is not the day done?

When the beard becomes white, is not a man done?

When the butcher has stopped selling, is not the market done?  
Drive in thy flocks, O shepherd, now the day is over.

He who has no friend can never say,  
"I have been happy."  
For it is friends that make life to pass.  
It is not the steep paths that wear out the knees;  
What wears them out are the words that change.  
He who hath a broken heart, what may cure him,  
Unless it be the smile or the word of a friend?  
The heart that hath no one to speak to,  
Better exile for him or even death.

The shot from the ambuscade is the bitterest of all;  
Bitter are the tears of a friend who weeps;  
The rose-laurel is bitter; who ever ate it and found it sweet?  
But I have eaten it for my friend; it was not bitter.

The gun and the bullet are not found apart;  
Painted eyes are not found apart from antimony!  
The heart is not found apart from its friends  
Until they all go down under the ground.

Sidi Hammou said many wise words;  
Thou canst not know them all,  
No more than the bounds of the sea.  
He who is without money, though his face be fair as the moon;  
If he hath nothing, he is nothing.  
Even alive he is as one dead.  
O silver douros, it is you that make the face to shine;  
I have found that the veins of the heart are in the hand.  
Money is a clever talker, it will not let one say, "No."  
Show it to someone, it will speak for thee.  
Hunger is the greatest of woes;  
The mill stops turning, and our children weep.

May God keep Sidi Hammou, the singer, the sage, the poet.  
He said, that poor man:  
The wind, the lion, the river, slaves, women,  
Whoever seeketh good among them, seeketh evil.

He who still hath his mother-in-law hath trouble.  
Morning and evening when he cometh home, he eateth always  
in anger.

The day the mother of his wife shall die,  
Let him call a company to gather wood;  
Let him heap up a hundred stones  
And with his own hand let him build a fire of hell to burn her.  
He will find peace.

Then he should take the daughter whom she hath left  
And every morning make her eat a hundred blows with a stick.  
For women and mules are from the same plant.

After the singing we must eat again, a *kouskous* this time, without which no meal is complete. Now the eating of *kouskous* requires a special technique which I never acquired. A handful of the moist white grains must be rolled into a neat golf ball with the right hand (to touch food with the left hand is very bad manners) and then by a deft twist of the thumb it is rolled into one's mouth. As the balls I roll always explode just as I get them to my mouth, I have to be fed by some kind neighbour. When we have eaten a rarely flavoured, exotic melon, the refreshments are over, and we are to drive through the domain of the caïd in the wonderful automobile.

We leave the hall to the five ebony handmaidens in magenta and saffron and go down to the outer court. Here fifty of the caliph'a retainers surround him and kiss his shoulder as a token of fealty. This in time of peace seems to be their only duty.

They pass the hours lounging about the court or riding aimlessly over the plain, graceful and picturesquely indolent, but not very smart in their every-day costumes. The automobile road is a casual affair, merely a cleared track through rough stubble fields where the loose stone has been scraped off. We bump and sway along for a half hour over a brown dry country always the same. Everywhere we meet groups of peasants returning from the threshing floors, and here and there a village or a fortified kasba; the men greet their chieftain with shouts and uplifted right hands. At one of the floors we stop and sit on a mat before a brush hut and eat once more. The food is the same kind that we have been gorging all the afternoon, but we must make a pretence of continuing to enjoy it. We drive back through magnificent sunset scenes of "Orange and azure deepening into gold," and say farewell to our courteous host at the gate of his kasba.

The next day we felt that we were sufficiently in favour with the Slave of the Compassionate to attempt to take our leave, and push on through the Souss. In the afternoon, we had the mules packed and everything ready for departure. We distributed liberal *fabor* to the major-domo, the slaves,

the cook, the water-boys, and the pickaninnies, to every member of the palace household who put in appearance at the news of our leaving. And then we sent a messenger to the caliph'a kasba to announce our intention and to ask permission to make our adieux. After waiting several hours, the messenger returned with orders that we were not to leave. The caliph'a would come to see us. After another hour, he came, gracious, smiling, and exquisitely polite, but quite firm. We could not go. No news had come as yet from Taroudant. Monsieur Lapandéry swore by his ancestors, and we unpacked the mules.

In the early evening we had tea in the caïd's garden, and talked long of politics, of trade and development. We gathered that the Souss is morally subdued and reconciled to the inevitable extension of the Protectorate. The great Glaoui and the Goundafi have cast in their lot on the side of the French, and the vassal tribesmen bow to the will of their lords and the decree of Allah. This talk was facilitated by the presence of a visiting sheik who spoke Arabic and translated for the caliph'a, when our imperfect knowledge of Shelluh made it necessary. The twilight deepened over the garden as we talked; the two Berbers occasionally whispered confidences among themselves; and

Monsieur Lapandéry twirled his moustaches and gesticulated in his animated way. And meantime little Kbira played about on the rich carpet, toying with the great key of our apartments, large enough to secure the treasure of the Sultan, but she had one ear open to the conversation, and now came to her father's rescue with a translation, and now administered sharp cuffs to Lulú the hound for trespassing on the sacred precincts of the carpet. And in the midst of all this political talk, an old servant behind us obeyed the inevitable muezzin's call and said his prayer.

We were, of course, much disappointed that our attempt to escape from our luxurious captivity had failed, but when Allah sends a misfortune, he may, if it please him, follow it by a great happiness. Praise be to the Most Merciful!

Now it came to pass that night that our party settled down to sleep earlier than usual, Monsieur Lapandéry and Kbira on the cushions in their apartment, with the curtain down to keep out too much night air; old Si Lhassen and his grandson, in the storeroom with their heads on the bag of silver *douros*; and I on my silk mattress outside in our little court. The moonlight flooded everything with the whiteness of hoar-frost, and made gleam-

ing metallic ripples in the little spattering fountain, and shone strangely on the talismanic hand of Fatima that formed one huge iron hinge of the mysterious door from behind which we had heard the careless laughter of women. My bed was in the shadowed angle of the wall protected from the brilliant white moonlight, and I lay listening to the perfect silence, waiting for the monotonous tinkle of the fountain to put me to sleep.

Then the lock of the mysterious door grated, the door opened, and a lovely young girl with a two-stringed lute in one hand and a felt prayer-cushion in the other, appeared. She gives a swift glance around, walks to the fountain and sits partly in the shadow of an almond tree, with her exquisite profile turned toward me, and one little bare foot peeping out from her dark-hued caftan into the moonlight. No, she cannot be a vision, or she should be playing a dulcimer and singing of Mount Abora. But she plays a two-stringed lute called a *rhab*, a very flat toned, strange-sounding instrument, out of which she makes music as plaintive as the cry of a tired child and as monotonous as the plash of the fountain. She should be described by an Arab, not by an occidental, and, in fact, she was described by a poet fourteen hundred years ago in the Arabian desert:

When the Pleiades shone in the heavens,  
Glorious as a belt sown with precious stones,  
I came to her.

With her day garments laid aside  
She was clad only in a light robe.  
She waited for me behind the curtain of her tent.

She is like a pure pearl,  
The shell of which hath a delicate cloudy whiteness,  
A pearl nourished by kindly waters in the deep seas.  
She turns aside;  
She shows me the profile of a lovely cheek,  
She looks in my eyes,  
And her eyes show the softness of the antelope of Wadja  
Watching over her fawn.  
Her neck has the grace of that of a white gazelle,  
But the gazelle's neck is not covered with jewels like hers.  
Her long hair, glossy black, falls gracefully over her shoulders,  
Thick as a palm branch laden with dates.

In the morning her bed is perfumed with musk.  
She sleeps long after the rising of the sun,  
For she does not need to wear the dress and the girdle  
Of those who labor.  
The radiance of her brow scatters the shadows of night,  
Even as a torch lighted by a hermit in his cave.  
Time calms the wild desires of most lovers,  
But nothing, O my Love, shall make my heart forget  
The passion it feels for thee!\*

The adorable little damsel goes on strumming  
her melancholy lute slowly, very slowly, always  
looking at the moonlit ripples in the tiny basin.  
Then in a soft, scarcely audible voice she sings a  
homesick little tune that I cannot understand, but  
it is full of yearning and tears, of longing for some

\* Imr El Kais.

far-away oasis, or for her first lover, perhaps a dark lithe-bodied Mauretainian garbed in blue. She stops singing and sits motionless, gazing long and silently at the fountain. The only way I can explain her being here is that the news of our intended departure was spread all through the palace, but the reversal of our plans by the caliphā was not known in the women's quarters. And her master, the caïd, is still away from home. In any case, here she is, and I am broad awake and not dreaming.

A faint stir of night air breathes over the court; an almond leaf flutters down and floats like a little boat in the basin of the fountain. My elbow is cramped, but I am afraid to stir lest she should know I am here and run frightened away. She remains motionless with her chin resting in her little henna-stained hand. And then I am afraid she may go away and not know that I am here! I wish to speak to her, but how shall I begin? "Hail, foreign wonder?" or, "Most sure the goddess on whom these airs attend?" No, neither Milton nor Shakespeare ever had just this situation to manage. Finally, I begin simply with, "Good-evening, ma chérie!" in the gentlest Arabic my Nazarene tongue can use. She starts suddenly like an animal surprised in the woods, is about to run, and then hesi-

tates, staring wide-eyed at my corner sheltered from the moonlight. And I think of the old poet's phrase about the antelope of Wadjra. Now verily, there is no might and there is no majesty save in Allah, the glorious, the great! For of all the greetings I might have chosen this was the one to make her hesitate, for it turned out that her name was Aziza ("Sweetheart"), the same as that of my lady mule, and out of sheer curiosity she did not immediately run away.

But the conversation so auspiciously begun stops here, for, beyond a few words she does not understand Arabic. I try some polite Shelluh phrases, but we do not get on, for not only is my pronunciation none of the best, but her dialect does not sound like that I have heard around us here. She makes me understand that she comes from a far country, from a tribe who live under the tent, far beyond the ancient oasis of Tafilalat, down in the unknown Sahara. I try to remember a few phrases from Arabic love songs,

It is not in the midst of the tribe to which thou belongest  
That thou dost really dwell;  
Thy true lodging is in thy lover's heart.

Of course she does not understand the words, but I think she guesses what they mean.

Whenever I meet thee,  
E'en though it be the middle of the night,  
Then I think I see the radiant dawn!

And still she listens, but does not say a word.

I only look at the stars of heaven  
Because they remind me of thine eyes!

For a long time we gaze at each other without speaking. Then I ask Aziza, with a sign and smile if I may go and sit beside her. She violently shakes her head and the silver bangles in her jewelled ears tinkle musically. I disregard her refusal and sit beside her in the shadow of the little almond tree. Another leaf flutters down and floats in the fountain, and we both watch it silently for a long time. Then she looks up into my face and smiles. "Bow, arrow, and sword are all in her glance."

And I take her little henna-stained hand in mine.

Suddenly the perfect silence of the night was startled by the long drawn howl of a dog far off somewhere, baying at the moon, a strangely mournful sound, unpleasantly breaking in on the idyllic mood. Aziza looked frightened and withdrew her little hand from mine. Then came a low growl from behind the curtained doorway at my back, and Lulú the hound thrust out his head and began

a long terrifying ululation, partly in surprise at seeing Aziza, and partly in answer to this fellow far off across the plain. Aziza's noiseless bare feet quickly disappeared through the mysterious doorway, and the key cruelly grated in the lock.

Monsieur Lapandéry, now aroused, thrust his head out from the curtain and made sharp remarks to Lulú, who was still continuing to howl.

"Ah, Monsieur," he asked in surprise, "what are you doing up so late?"

"Nothing," I replied, "just dreaming in the moonlight."



*Twelve*

THE RETURN

O traveller devouring the desert ways and solitudes,  
Thou art in the right path,  
And thou shalt arrive safe and sound.  
Go on, speed thy pace, journey night and day,  
For thou goest on toward a glorious Evening Star.

**ABOURREBIA EL GHARNATHI.**

## *Twelve*

### THE RETURN

THE next morning the caliph's runner came back from Taroudant, where the higher native authorities had consulted with the French mission posted there. A letter from the Bureau des Renseignements very courteously advised us, because of the imperfect security of the country, not to attempt to pursue our journey further into the Souss, but to go back over the mountains to Marrakesh. We were, of course, unwilling to do this, but we had no choice, for the caliph sent us back with an escort of two soldiers. We had been detained but eight days in this strange old palace-fortress, but we felt we had been living this indolent, eventless life for a vaguely indefinite period. Time had ceased to have any significance and had become a succession of dreaming moments, a listless, monotonous peace.

As we rode through the outer court for the last time, past the old negresses at the well, past the curious students looking down from the mosque

roof, and past the sleepy guards at the gate, I wondered if Aziza's dark eyes were among those that peered out of the gloom behind the mysterious little blue latticed windows. We took our ceremonious farewell of the caliph at the gate of his castle and, with our native guards, set out across the plain for a short-cut trail that quickly brought us into the wild and rugged heart of the great Southern Atlas.

The first two days were without important incidents for the party, but rich in the experience of travelling through scenes unbelievably wonderful, panoramas of gigantic mountains bathed in clear light, vistas of dead volcanic valleys, lurid, sulphurous, and strange; torrents of icy water roaring from rocky caverns, and terrible ascents up almost impassable slopes. Once at nightfall we passed a small clan of migrating tribesmen in a temporary camp. The unloaded camels browsed on the scanty vegetation or lay in ruminating tranquillity under the argan trees; the women were squatting near a dozen fires that blazed under tea kettles and *kouskous* bowls; and the men lay stretched out at ease waiting for their evening meal.

And one night we spent in a *mellah*, or Jewish village. Throughout Morocco the Jews live in villages apart from the Moslems, or, in the cities,



THE TRAIL THROUGH THE ATLAS.  
The narrow rocky way winds along the verge of precipices  
almost sheer, where a falling stone will roll and leap, and  
rebound and echo up from a cavernous dry stream bed far  
below.



they have special quarters assigned to them. Before I had dismounted, a young Jew came and walked by my side and held the spout of a metal teapot to my lips. It was full of *maya*, a drink distilled from wild honey. This is a very merry beverage, the same thing as the old English mead; it makes the bees buzz round in your head, the flavor of the honeycomb is in your mouth, and the world seems a wonderful place to live in. It was Friday night, and old black bearded Jews in long white mantles newly washed for the Sabbath, crowded round us and bade us welcome. Some of the younger women were very pretty, with delicate features and "eyes like the fishpools of Heshbon by the gate of Bathrabbim." Shy groups of them, gay in their Sabbath dress and conspicuous with silver jewelry, gazed down at us from a nearby housetop, and discussed us in tantalising whispers. An old mother in Israel, a toothless hag of ninety years, sat in the gloomy doorway of her hut and muttered things at us as we passed, as Deborah might have against the Philistines; and Rebecca carried us fresh water in a big earthen jar from the village well. And Rahab was there among the rest, ready to quote the seventh chapter of Proverbs.

Although it was after sun-down and the Sabbath

had begun, when no stroke of work may be done in the *mellah*, one thrifty old Jacob, probably with a mental reservation about helping asses fallen into a pit, brought us a bowl of sour milk, a very tasty *kouskous* and a jar of honey. We expressed our appreciation of his hospitality, which he assured us was not worth mentioning; but when we had eaten the food, true to his racial traditions, he demanded an exorbitant sum in payment. And one loathsome old scoundrel whispered in our ears the infamous proposal of sending his two daughters to our camp after nightfall.

Monsieur Lapandéry and I enjoyed our excellent supper and appreciated the rather potent *maya*; but old Si Lhassen was not so happy, for his religion not only made him a prohibitionist, but also forbade him to touch food prepared by an unbelieving Jew; furthermore, the only thing we had left in the way of supplies was part of a ham, the product of the accursed pig! Little Kbira, who considers herself French, of course had no scruples in such matters. I often wondered how the silent old patriarch felt about the apostasy of his daughter and granddaughter, even though it brought great material advantages with it. But probably he thought nothing of it at all, for women

having no souls, their religion must be a matter of small consequence.

The next afternoon we started on the trail that leads up over the great lonely peak of Tizi Oui-cheddan. From below, mighty crags loom over our heads, forbidding and almost impassable. The narrow, perplexing path we must climb is lost a few yards above us, and the black hard face of the cliff seems to go up hundreds of feet almost sheer to the sharp sky line. The two agile soldiers of our guard have climbed on ahead. My mule plants her sure feet in the ledges and crevices that afford her scanty footing; her straining neck reaches forward and I lean over to keep the balance and loosen my feet in the stirrups, ready to jump should some stone in the path give way under us. Half way up the ascent I look down and wonder how we have been able to make the climb, which seems as impossible from above as from below. Kbira is riding behind Monsieur Lapandéry's saddle, her arms clutching his waist, for the path is too difficult for her to ride her heavily loaded mule. Kino is a sure-footed horse, but this is no journey for a horse; he is much less sure of himself in the mountains than the dogged, experienced little mules.

In a very dangerous place, Kino's hind legs slipped, and, frantically trying to save himself, he slid toward the edge of the precipice. I was like one in the throes of a terrible nightmare, compelled to watch a ghastly tragedy going on a few yards below me, and utterly powerless to help. The scene, which chilled one's blood to watch, must have taken but a few seconds, but it seemed to be going on for many tense and terrible minutes. It was like the experience of being in an aeroplane that is sideslipping close to the ground; an eternity of waiting for the inevitable final crash.

Kbira fell over the slope, but saved herself by clutching a scraggy shrub twenty feet below. Monsieur Lapandéry, in his effort to save Kbira, could not leap from his horse, but he and the animal slid toward the slope together and stopped at the very edge. A large loose boulder rolled on Monsieur Lapandéry and for a moment pinned him to the rock; Kino was unhurt, but lay still, terribly frightened. I rescued Kbira from her position, bandaged Monsieur Lapandéry's injured hand and badly bruised chest, and dealt out a generous ration of *maya* to restore the shaken morale of the party.

Monsieur Lapandéry protested that he was not hurt, and after a short rest we resumed the climb. In another hour, we reach the great barren peak in

a fierce cold wind that blows from a still higher snow-capped summit miles off to the north. The sky over the distant mountains has turned a threatening leaden blue, and thunder rumbles over the valley into which we must descend. For the first hour we lead the animals down the dangerous slope, and then reach the zone of vegetation. We halt in a wild olive grove to rest and allow the tired animals time to eat.

Monsieur Lapandéry now shows that he has been badly hurt. His nerve has kept him up so far, but his chest pains him severely and he breathes with difficulty. We make a bed of rugs and blankets for him under the wild olives. He becomes terribly depressed in spirit and evidently can go no farther. A wild rain storm is raging to the north; strange misty masses of cloud, like grotesque Protean animals, detach themselves from the dark northern sky and move rapidly over the high mountain peaks; and fierce lightning-flashes tear the gloom that hangs thickly over the lofty Djebel Mskrin. The sun has set in the great valley below us, but up here among the hills, its golden rays stream through the western clouds and break into lights and shadows on the hundred summits piled in confusion around us. An amber shadowless glow fills the sombre olive grove where we are resting.

Monsieur Lapandéry, very pale beneath his tanned skin, lay propped up on a pile of brilliant rugs I had bought in the Souss. His fine spirit, which I had never seen desert him before, seemed to have gone. In a dull voice he talked of his past life, of his serious boyhood in Burgundy, of his education for the priesthood, and of his loss of faith in everything except the power of God. And then he told of his wandering life in the colonies, of his aimless struggles, with the usual lack of success of a rolling stone, of his constant dissatisfaction with life, and of his final resignation to his growing belief in oriental fatalism.

"This may be my last cigarette," he said in a tone that implied that nothing mattered. "Well, if it is, so be it! *Inshallah!*" Little Kbira was sitting beside him softly crying, and old Si Lhassen sat cross-legged at a little distance, smoking his kief pipe, his wrinkled face placidly inscrutable.

Then Monsieur Lapandéry talked of Kbira, of how she had been the only interest of his life for the last two years. When he discovered that besides her childish charm she had a keenness and aptitude for learning, he had devoted himself to her training. Making a future for her had given him a new ambition. Then, still talking in an unaccustomed low voice, he made his will, leaving

all his small property to Kbira. He closed his eyes and remained silent for a long time. There was no sound but the animals munching their barley and little Kbira softly crying. After a few minutes, he opened his eyes and looked at the marvellous scene before us, the lightning storm playing round Djebel Mskrin away to the north, and the uncanny quiet light in the wild olive grove.

"Lamartine would have loved to die here in this wonderful spot high up among the eternal hills!" said he, clutching his bruised chest with one hand and making a gesture with the other. At last I had the key to the situation. He was a sentimentalist finding a melancholy pleasure in his own painful emotions. As his pulse was strong and no ribs were broken, I could not believe that he was as badly off as he felt he was. He breathed with difficulty and was doubtless in some pain, but he belonged to the romantic generation of Lamartine, and could not resist indulging in deathbed emotions in the most romantic spot in the world. I felt that the mood would eventually pass, and so I played up to it as well as I could, meanwhile keeping a careful eye out for any change in his actual symptoms.

Suddenly he pulled himself together, and, starting up to his feet, exclaimed, "But my work is

not yet finished!" and patted little Kbira's curly head. And soon with some assistance he mounted Kino, and we started on down the mountain, hoping to camp at the junction of the Oued Agoundis with the Oued Nfis. I kept near him on foot for fear he might fall. "If I do not make it," he said, "I wish to be buried there where the rivers meet." Several times during the descent he reined in, and in the mood of one reluctant to leave the beauty of the world, which more than compensates for the sorrow of it, exclaimed with a sweep of his injured hand toward the glorious darkening mountains, "Ah, que c'est beau, Monsieur Andrews! Que c'est beau!"

At dark we reached the camping spot and made preparations for the night. The two Shelluh soldiers who had protested all along that they were ordered to take us to the kasba of the Goundafi at the upper end of the valley, now became unruly and showed ugly symptoms. We refused to go to the kasba because the detour would considerably lengthen the journey, and we feared we might be detained for several days more. The soldiers, however, preferred the fleshpots of the chief's castle to a night in the open. I ordered Si Lhassen to unpack the mules and busied myself with pretending to polish my very efficient-looking automatic.



#### A HALT FOR LUNCH. THE ATLAS TRAIL.

The author and little Kbira are hopefully watching one of Si Lhassen's tough chickens boil. The two cooks are soldiers of the caid sent to accompany the party over the mountains.



The soldiers at once dropped their threatening manner and went off in search of food. In an hour they returned with nothing, and as Si Lhassen's efforts in the nearest village were unsuccessful, there was nothing for it but to go supperless to bed.

Monsieur Lapandéry had a little fever, and his hurts were so painful that he could not sleep. I made my bed beside him and lay awake till early morning, drinking strong cold tea and smoking a very old and very consoling pipe. I dreamily spelled out the constellations until the late moon came up and blotted most of them out. It was my turn to become the sentimentalist enjoying emotions. I thought of the astrologers and the lovers and the dreamers who had puzzled over the stars in this same valley six hundred years ago, when these Atlas tribes had suddenly developed into a militant power that conquered Morocco. Not ten miles up the valley are the ruins of Tinmel, in the eleventh century a rival of Marrakesh, a city of perhaps a hundred thousand souls, which a great barbarian queen destroyed centuries ago. And to-day there is nothing left but the fragment of a mosque and a great desolate cemetery, where greedy natives dig for buried treasure among the broken tombs.

If you would know the age of the world, my brothers,  
Ask of the changeless stars Fakarden,  
How many races and realms of earth they have seen  
Following one another on through time,  
And how long each endured.  
And ask them how long it has been since days  
Have followed in succession, day by day,  
And for how many nights their shining fires  
Have lighted the ways of travellers o'er the world.\*

The injured man tossed restlessly at my side, the Oued Nfis gurgled sullenly over the stones in its half dry bed, and the jackals barked as they came down from the hills to drink. By three o'clock mule caravans began to go by, the drivers singing their strangely beautiful yodels, one answering another as they filed into the valley, and the mountains echoed refrains. The yodels were punctuated by the sharp calls to the mules, "*Arrr Zit! Zit!*" to urge them on, and "*Shoah! Shoah! Ouzay!*" to hold them in. At dawn a flock of bleating sheep passed, pushing and crowding to drink from the river. One shepherd lad carried a new-born lamb on his arm, and the other, a laughing young barbarian, thumped a pottery tom-tom, and I heard his sprightly rhythms blending with the bleating of the sheep, as they passed down into the river gorge.

After a morning's rest, Monsieur Lapandéry

\* Abou Ela El Moarri.

was able to continue the journey. We got rid of the two objectionable Shelluh soldiers by paying them well, and sent them back to the Souss, and we started on our way north. During the afternoon and the next morning we went back through the wonderful valley of the Oued Nfis, superb in its wild scenery and fascinating with its primitive population living in terraced cliff-dwellings and picturesque mountain castles. The rest of our way led through territory we had not traversed on the trip south.

We passed a delightful day as the guests of the Sheik Assou Ben Abderrahman, an old friend of Monsieur Lapandéry. His *agadir* is in the midst of an upland valley in the marvellously beautiful hill-slopes of the lower Atlas. The lovely spot is called in Shelluh the "Liver of the Mountains." The liver among the Berbers, as it was with the ancient Greeks, is the seat of the affections, and so is used where we should say "heart." The trail into this mountain paradise winds for hours through a flowery, bowery way, over-arched with tangles of trailing vines of white clematis and incense-breathing honeysuckle; varied with orange-coloured wild rose fruits and purple-stained elder berries, or occasionally the scarlet splash of joy of a ripe pomegranate, from seeds blown south from

the garden of the Hesperides. On three sides of the *agadir* steep summits rise two thousand feet above the valley. Down the side of one of them rushes an icy stream that tears a deep gully through the hollow, and waters flourishing groves of figs and olives and hanging, terraced patches of millet and melon vines.

The Sheik Assou Ben Abderrahman receives us most courteously, and feeds us with the usual bountiful hospitality of a Moorish chieftain. We are left in a little tower chamber to rest and sleep through the afternoon, lulled into drowsiness by the roaring stream, the wild doves moaning in the fig trees, the intensely shrill, hot cry of innumerable cicalas, and the buzzing of a million flies. At six in the evening I go down the valley for a bath in an icy-cold pool I have discovered, below a little waterfall, and revel in the sharp contrast between the stifling heat of the afternoon and the coldness of this mountain stream. Two young Shelluh girls driving diminutive cattle, come by and frankly stare at me. The astonishment at suddenly discovering a white, naked, and apparently insane European splashing about under a waterfall and diving into a boiling torrent pool, is so great that they quite forget the proprieties. Perhaps they take me for some crazy djinn, and will ask the local

sorcerer for another protective amulet to add to the collection around their necks.

After our tea with hot pancakes and butter and honey, we sit on the roof of the square kasba tower and wait for dinner. Here we enjoy the same calm evening scenes that we have met everywhere in the Moroccan countryside. Far across the hillsides the flocks wind straggling down to fold, labourers come by singing from the threshing-floor, and the sounds of a lonesome pipe, or the desultory rhythm of the omnipresent tom-tom floats on the air. Distant lights begin to appear in the little villages, a mysterious bright beacon fire flashes high up on a mountain top, and a cool fresh breeze stirs through the valley.

After dinner old Si Lhassen lights his kief pipe and tells a quaint folk-tale to little Kbira, who sleepily cuddles up to him and listens, as children always have, everywhere in the world, ever since there have been grandfathers who knew animal stories. I lay rolled in a blanket and listened to the old man mumbling over the tale and little Kbira quietly chuckling.

Once upon a time an ass, a cock, a sheep, and a sleugi-dog all lived together in the courtyard of a woman's house. The woman was going to have a child. From time to time she became very peev-

ish. She made so much trouble about the animals in the yard that they became afraid. The sleugi-dog said that next she would boil the cock for soup and kill the sheep for his fleece, and beat the ass and himself out of the house with rods. So they took counsel together. All decided that it would be safer to go and live in the mountains. They went off to the mountains and lived in a cave.

One day the cock was scratching about. He found a pit in which men had hidden a quantity of grain. The ass ate greedily of the grain and soon became very thirsty. The cock told him to go down to the brook and drink but not to make any noise. The ass went down and drank, and the grain in his belly began to swell. Soon he became very ill. He rolled on the ground and hee-hawed wildly. A hyena heard the noise and came to the place. He was going to eat the ass. The ass told the hyena that he had three friends, a cock, a sheep, and a dog who would make better eating. He was too old and tough. He led the hyena up to the cave. The sleugi-dog saw them coming and knew what had happened. He told the cock and the sheep to pretend to give the hyena a fair reception. The ass and the hyena reached the cave. The cock and the sheep went out to say, *Salamalek!* and pretended to kiss his shoulder in humility. The cock flew at the hyena and pecked out his eyes. And the sheep butted him to death against the rock. They took the hyena's skin and dried it in the sun.

Another day the cock was scratching about. He found another pit in which men had hidden a quan-

tity of grain. The ass ate greedily—(and so on as before. A second hyena appears and in the same way is brought to the cave). The cock and the sheep and the sleugi-dog greet the hyena respectfully. The cock says to the sleugi-dog, "Gö get the hyena skin. Our guest wishes to sit down." The cock fetches the skin. "No, take that back and bring a finer one," says the cock. The sleugi-dog takes the skin away. He comes back again with the same skin. "No, not that one," says the cock. "There is a finer, bigger one." The sleugi-dog goes away again with the skin. The hyena becomes frightened. This must be a bad place for hyenas. He decides to run away. And so the animals escaped a second time.

After this, the story wandered on for many more episodes, but I was very sleepy. I lay listening and staring dreamily up at Leda's swan, until somehow it turned into a hyena. And I never heard the rest of the tale.

From the "Liver of the Mountains" to Marra-kesh was a very long day's ride from early morning till nine at night, with three hours' midday halt. We reluctantly left the wonderful green valley and filed down past the fig orchard and the hill slopes, where the dark olive trees still dreamed in the dawn, and the early breeze ruffling the silvery underside of their foliage, made pale waves in a

sea of green. We soon struck the Oued Reraia, where the place-names begin to fill in the sketchy thin outlines on the map. The trail from here on is broad and level, passing through a thickly populated and well-watered region, where innumerable streams from the hills meet the Oued and try to replenish its shrinking volume, as it winds sluggishly through a broad valley, which opens out into the plain. Just before we left the foothills we passed the famous Marabout shrine of Sidi Brahim, which we could just glimpse far above our heads on the edge of the cliff. The trails, which lead here from every direction, are cluttered with cairns heaped by pious pilgrims, who throng, in certain seasons, from all parts of southern Morocco, and as they approach the sacred shrine, purify themselves with prayers and penances, of which these stones remain as memorials. Farther on down the trail, a little flume sluiced off from the Oued, turns the lumbering wheel of an old stone mill that leans in mournful dilapidation against a huge rock.

The last stage of the journey, a blazing afternoon through the terrible treeless plain, without a single shadow to relieve the pitiless glare, seemed the hardest of all the hard ways we had travelled. For hours and hours we watched the Koutoubia

tower grow from a small speck, scarcely visible through the shimmering heat waves vibrating over the brown dust, to a lighthouse towering above a green sea of palms. At sunset, as we crept slowly on toward our goal, the oasis city of Marrakesh loomed vast and splendid, its ancient walls drenched in the blood of the sun, its minarets of glowing turquoise reaching up over rose-brown roofs and sombre cypresses and palms. As the twilight deepened, silhouetted flocks of sheep and hurrying, belated caravans moved toward the ten great city gates, and night shut down over the roofs and courtyards that enclose the thousand mysteries of Moorish life, and the lonely stars brooded over the walls and mosques, with their terrible memories and mournful dreams.

THE END











